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Violet

The Child of the city

Boston Maps

May 20<sup>th</sup> 1871

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VIOLET:  
THE CHILD OF THE CITY.

A Story of New York Life.

BY ROBERT F. GREELEY.

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New York.

BUNCE & BROTHER, PUBLISHERS,  
134 NASSAU STREET.

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## P R E F A C E .

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FOR many years past the world has been agitated by a variety of propositions for ameliorating the condition, not of the masses merely, but of the great body of man-and-womankind which constitutes society within the proper meaning of the word. These projects met with varied success, according to the degree of talent and energy exhibited by their several authors; but most of them having failed, as mere experiments, the projectors invariably ceased to attract the public attention, and were classed among the theorists, just as Galileo and Newton, and Fulton, and a thousand others have been before and since—their productions being still read by a few devoted admirers as much for the intrinsic merit of their contents as for any other reason, but very little attention being paid to their principles. Men of means take a practical rather than a philosophical view of this world's affairs—owing, we suppose, to that first law of nature that we must provide for ourselves and for those immediately dependent on us before extending our benefits to others; and thus but few comparatively have been induced to favor such schemes as may occasionally have been brought under their notice. Men, once fallen from their high estate, grow callous, it would seem, to the better impulses of nature, and, being confirmed in their evil habits, the work of reformation is with them an arduous task. With children the case is different, and here lies the newly-discovered vein in which so many philanthropic persons have lately been working with such unanticipated success. Philanthropy, that has been dozing for a long while past, discouraged with the ill result which had attended the most of her efforts for the redemption of humanity, is once more at

her post, and in the channel to which we allude is already working wonders.

A Report of one of the numerous charitable associations which have lately sprung into existence informs us (we quote the language of the Editor of the *Times*, in which the article in question appeared), "That there are 10,000 vagrant children in this city; that in eleven Wards over 3,000 children, of whom 2,000 are girls, between eight and sixteen years old, are regularly trained to theft; that out of 16,000 criminals arrested during the year, one *fourth* were under 21, and 800 under 15 years of age. These children," says Mr. Raymond, "are thus engaged because they have no other way to earn a living, and nobody to teach them better.

"The object of this Society (*The Children's Aid Society*) is" (we are still quoting the *Times*) "to see whether these children cannot be brought under better influences. It looks them up in the first place—gives them food, and sets them to work. One most admirable means of providing for them has been to find places for them with farmers, mechanics, and manufacturers in the country; and the report states that applications for these boys and girls, from various sections of the country, come in faster than they can be supplied. This is a most hopeful fact. All that is needed is *money* to send them to the places where they are wanted. Over 200 have been thus sent off.

"Another mode resorted to is to provide *workshops* for them in the City, where they can be taught to do coarse work for manufacturers—receiving pay regularly, and at the same time learning how to earn an honest living. During the last year 115 boys have been thus employed in a shop for pegging shoes. The receipts of the shop have been \$671, and the expenses \$865; so that the net cost of this great charity has been but \$194. Several schools have been established, where this class of children, who cannot attend the Ward Schools, are taught not only the elements of useful knowledge, but the elements of useful labor."

There are, also, other associations where the children of the city are



provided for, and some, where grown persons are made the objects on whose account our philanthropic tendencies are appealed to. All of them appear to be fairly under way and reasonably successful—partly owing to the fact that many of the newspapers and other publications have lately been engaged in disseminating the views of the projectors, the names of many of whom are familiar with us in connexion with charitable deeds. If ever the detractor seeks to pervert their efforts, let Society put its foot at once upon him.

Among other objects which actuated the inditing of this book, the author has sought to show in the characters of Mr. Lyle and Violet, that poverty is not always, nor even in the majority of cases, necessarily accompanied by crime; but that long continued misfortunes, bodily ailment and mental discouragement, sometimes reduce to the lowest depths of degradation the most noble characters and the brightest intellects. Any close observer of human nature in large cities can bear witness to this fact—has himself met with at least one example in proof. But it is also sought to be shown that no case is too desperate to find a remedy, and to illustrate this truism the characters of Mr. Humphreys and his adopted son are introduced. Mr. Pryce Benedick and his coterie are held forth as the types of a class which abounds wherever the English tongue prevails, and for which an English writer can find no term more happy and appropriate than “snob.” This class of persons we consider to the full as unfortunate as their more poverty-stricken neighbors, and to them and their children philanthropy cannot be too profitably directed. But the *Tribune* having taken their case in hand, we forbear to add anything to what has already been said of them in the body of this work. It is hardly necessary to state that personalities have found no place in its pages. The characters, imperfectly drawn as they are, are exhibited only for the purpose of displaying in their broadest colors the follies and backslidings of society, and had it been merely for the sake of introducing a few remarks with regard to them, this preface would not have been written.

There are few of us totally destitute of charitable impulses, but very many are destitute of the knowledge how to indulge them. A reference to the columns of the city dailies, and in particular of the two papers of which we have spoken, will afford all the necessary information, and for the rest we will only draw attention to the benevolent enterprises of which Rev. C. L. Brace is the deserving agent, and whose quarters are at No. 20 Bible House. If each of our readers could be induced to give these enterprises such aid and countenance as his means will admit, many a future Violet and many an Edith Gray may be saved from ruin.

# VIOLET,

## The Child of the City.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE WELCOME VISITOR.

THERE is a familiar spirit which, born amid the blue and far-off hills, occasionally drops in upon the denizens of this famous metropolis—surprising the merchant at his ledger, the man of money at his pastime, the artisan at his toil: passing through keyholes and crevices as well as through open doors; invading alike scenes of festivity and business places—gliding in at the window of the martyr to a prosperous trade and seven healthy children, with the first gleam of sunshine that the clouds have permitted to pass them this April morning—floating by on that balmy whiff of air that has just come, laden with the first sweets of Spring and a dash of fresh brine, from the Hempstead meadows—flitting about the carelessly attired forms of yon homely trio of countrymen, who, in all the fabulous splendor of bran new blue coats and brass buttons, are gazing in a fearful state of

wonderment, at the miraculous show of service in front of the St. Nicholas, lighting up their sunburned countenances with a glow of honest pleasure, which could never, for a moment, be confounded with the impassive tell-nothingness of the features of that tightly-braced cit who has just passed them—even perching maliciously, as Queen Mab might have done on her throne, upon that small Dunderbergh mountain of cabbage and greens, which piles up those huge country wains just approaching. Performing, as the humor doth take her, now a generous action—now a mischievous, wicked prank, such as none save herself would dream of, and yet doing all with so harmless and winning a grace, that, although the damage occasioned by her uncereemonious intrusion may not be slight, we cannot find heart enough to be angry with her.

Though centuries, with their chances and changes have rolled over her, her face, like the fairies of old, instead of decreasing in charms, gains fresh beauty from time. Her form is as lithe and graceful, her eyes are as bright, her brow as unwrinkled, her voice as musical as when, a blue-eyed playful thing, she was able to stray by herself from her home in the mountains, to visit the quiet homes and waving fields below.

Nor are her visits confined to a particular class: witness the pale, worn student, whose eyes, wandering from his well-thumbed book, are resting seemingly on vacancy, but are in reality fixed upon a picture in which all that is desirable in the mind of the dreamer is shadowed forth with a vividness

that shall glow within and around him, for the remainder of this day, with an intensity that sets the gloomy attic, with its single window and its changeless prospect of tiles, dead walls, and broken window-panes, at defiance; converting them, for the nonce into a kind of tropical tower. Witness the darkened study of the young artist, whose mahl stick is tracing strange figures upon that bright Italian sky that it has taken so much pains to "put in," while its wielder sinks listlessly back in his chair, absorbed, let us be sure, in a vision of his own creating. Witness the dim retreats, and poor abodes of thousands of God's creatures, for the moment resting from their toil, and whose hearts, all unknown to them, are sending up at this moment a voice of praise to the bounteous Creator of all: a prayer continually arising from the aisles of Nature's vast cathedral, piercing this earthly film, and soaring with the angels far on high—at night, when strife has ceased and all is still.

Does the reader, be his or her circumstances what they may, recognise the description?

It is the *Spirit of Home*: of all the words in the language we speak, the brightest! of all the words in the language we speak, summoning into existence the dearest memories—bringing into being what hosts of pleasant thoughts and delightful visions—recalling to existence what groups of smiling faces, bright with the flush of youth and early promise, or smiling benignant through the gathering wrinkles of honorable age.

Down in a certain quiet valley—we remember it well—

nestles a humble cottage. The grass grows fresh and green about it now as it did of yore—the trees wave and the waters sparkle now as they did then. There still is the old barn, and the well; the meadow, and the fields, the stream, and the distant spire; but strangers have crossed the threshold, and are gathered about the familiar hearths of many such, while the former occupants—gone many a long year since—it was after the division of the estate, as you all know—to the city to seek their fortunes; what has become of them? Do they or theirs still survive? and if so, have the golden results been realized which they fondly pictured to themselves when they turned to take the last look, to give the parting grasp, and to drop, let us hope it, a tear, for the Old Homestead that was to be theirs no more?

Let us trust they were not disappointed; but even if success crowned their efforts, may it not be questioned if in the surrendering that one spot of earth which alone was home to them, and for which, with millions at their back, they will in vain seek a substitute, they did not part with all in this life worth the having?

Make the most, friend artist, friend poet, friend artisan, of that little gleam of sunshine that has just struggled into your overworked brains: welcome its visit, friend merchant, ere your fortune is amassed, and you sink into the luxurious tortures of an ostentatious mansion. If to any of you the thought is not all distasteful, there is still an oasis, a single green spot left to moisten the brain and to chequer the desert of your utilitarian existence.

Happy in the possession of such memories are they to whom are permitted such treasures of thought! Though they perish in poverty, or it may be, in far distant lands, with none but the hands of strangers to close their lids, a smile will wreath the wan lips as the breath takes its departure : a single bright memory has attended the flight of an immortal soul to Heaven !

## CHAPTER II.

## THE OLD HOMESTEAD.

A LOVELY valley, bordered on every side by clustering masses of rich and many-colored foliage, intersects, like a deep-set scar the central portion of Pennsylvania—not the least remarkable feature of which is its almost total seclusion from the turbulent world by which it is surrounded. Owing to its utter inapplicability to the ordinary purposes of traffic, or to a combination of causes, its quiet nooks and shady glens had, until lately, escaped desecration, and railway shares and other like hallucinations were things unknown.

As though it had been intended that nothing should be wanting to complete the attractions of this favored spot, its inmates seemed to have become imbued with the spirit of peace which brooded over it, and the clacking of mill-wheels, the foaming of miniature water-falls, the lowing of cattle, were almost the only sounds which occurred to vary its delightful stillness.

When the crimson sunset of midsummer is lingering upon the tops of the distant hills, enveloping them as it were in a purple veil, and casting into the shade all that lies between, the beautiful Susquehanna, catching the fading rays—

“As slowly they blend in the coming of eve,”



seems transformed by their subtle alchemy into a vein of molten gold, and glides gently upon its winding course amid the far-off hills, until lost to view in the distance. A change now comes over the slumbering landscape; the last sunbeam has disappeared reluctantly from the loftiest hill-top, and yonder, high in the star-gemmed arch above, the early moon comes forth with her train of glittering satellites, and casts a softer glow upon the scene. From among the trees which line the valley on either side, a multitude of little lights shine out from the windows of the cottages, serving as beacons to the returning husbandman and the way-worn traveller; and in the tangled underwood is heard the ceaseless chirping of innumerable crickets.

It was on such a night as that we have just described—the time, mid-summer—that Walter Lyle, one of the most industrious and prosperous farmers in the valley, sat down in company with his wife, to partake of their evening meal. The kettle sang merrily upon the hearth, and the little fire which was always kept burning, let the weather be warm or cold, for household purposes, threw a ruddy glow upon the snow-white tablecloth, and upon the simple articles of furniture which filled the room. A small wicker cradle stood upon the floor, midway between the contented couple, containing a certain something, which was just then very active in its demonstrations of life, and which neither would have bartered, it may be observed, notwithstanding its noise, for the wealth of several Californias. Upon the broad hearth-stone, with his nose placed as closely against the crackling

brands as the heat would permit, a huge and shaggy dog, the farmer's invariable companion in his daily toil, had settled himself cosily down for an hour's uninterrupted cogitation. One other living object the room contained, which, to a stranger unaccustomed to the subdued light of the place, would have passed unnoticed. Nestled close to the side of the dog, lay a boy about three years of age, whose rich brown locks fell in a profusion of curls over his old companion's shaggy coat. That he was a favorite, might be divined at once, from the deep interest with which he was regarded, from time to time, by the elder couple. Owing to the sultriness of the night, the windows were open, and the chirping of the crickets without, and the singing of the kettle within, mingled together in a kind of domestic chorus by no means unpleasing to listen to.

The cottage was in itself a mere band-box of a place, with hardly sufficient room to move about in, and, surveying it from without as a stranger, you could not have avoided wondering how human beings of any dimensions could contrive to live with comfort in so diminutive a dwelling. Yet Walter Lyle and his buxom wife had scarcely bestowed a thought upon the matter, but had lived on in their own humble way from year to year, without a care to disturb the tranquil current of their existence.

Mr. Lyle was the son of an upright and thrifty farmer, and had received his education, although a plain one, in common with many whose families occupied, as the world goes, a position far superior to his own. Among those with whom he

became in this manner associated, was one for whom the embryo husbandman conceived an ardent friendship, and, so strong became the attachment between the two, Walter Lyle and Pryce Benedick, grew to be looked upon as inseparable, sharing all things in common with each other.

Between the parents of the two lads there was, however, a marked difference. The mother of Pryce was a city woman, inheriting, as such, all the airs and accomplishments which, in this age of civilization and refinement, are considered a mark of good breeding, and to be devoid of which is to be set down as vulgar, and unfit for contact with the great world. Of course, the company in which her son moved, the clothes he wore, and the language he used, were the chief objects of her maternal solicitude; while the father was continually saying—"What's the use of so many fine clothes? the boy's well enough as he is. Let him take care of his pocket-money, and cultivate bargainings with his young friends, and I have no fears on account of his future welfare." By "future," he meant, of course, the *world's* future; not that great future which his clergyman was so energetic in thumping into his noddle on Sundays three times, and of which the old gentleman was entirely oblivious during the remainder of the week. For a long time the naturally candid and affectionate disposition of boyhood set at nought all these parental efforts at its perversion, but the incessant repetition of such good old saws as "take care of No. 1;" "a pin a day is a groat a year;" "look after your pennies and your dollars will look after themselves;" with other sage admonitions of the

same sort, began by degrees to have their effect, and Pryce soon bade fair to become, under the able tuition of his parents, a thorough snob.

The parents of Walter Lyle being of the opposite stamp, and thinking more of cultivating in him those manly habits and virtues which used to be regarded as the distinctive attributes of the sex, were, of course, too plain for the society of such as the Benedicks, and although the families had originally flourished as neighbors in the same parish, no intercourse was kept up between them.

As time passed on, the two lads were withdrawn from their studies, and separated with a mutual promise never to lose sight of their early friendship, but to stand by and assist one another to the best of their abilities, whenever future occasion should demand it.

Pryce was transplanted to one of the first colleges at the North, where he vegetated in full luxuriance for the usual term of years, and was then withdrawn by his father to assist him in the counting-house, and generally prepare himself to become a sharer in the business. This step was not effected without some resistance on the part of Pryce's mother. She wanted to see her son a gentleman, as she called it, and in her opinion commerce was too vulgar a thing for the promising youth to soil his hands withal.

Mr. Benedick senior, holding the money bags, however, had his own way in this, the dearest wish of his heart, and Pryce became a merchant.

His comrade, Lyle, settled down upon the Old Homestead,

where his ancestors had for so many years settled before him. He applied himself diligently to the cultivation of the soil, took to himself a young and blooming wife, and eventually, on the demise of his parents, became the sole possessor of the little estate.

At the time of his introduction to the reader, Walter Lyle's affairs were certainly in a flourishing condition, and up to this period he had been perfectly satisfied with his lot.

From time to time, accounts would come up through various channels from the distant city, detailing in glowing colors the progress of the Benedicks. Pryce's name, at first hardly mentioned, soon became familiar to the neighborhood, through the columns of the journals, first as simple merchant, then as a bank director, next, the president of insurance and other joint-stock companies, and, finally, as one of the largest landed proprietors in this and the adjoining states. To cap the climax, one of Lyle's fellow-villagers had recently paid a visit to the city, where he had called on Pryce, by whom he had been invited to dine with him at his house, and whom he described as living literally in the lap of luxury.

The spirit of discontent, hitherto a total stranger to Lyle, began to rankle there. He endeavored to struggle against the feeling, but in vain. It had taken root, and was proof against all attempts at eradication. His home, until now a paradise on earth, became distasteful to him. The formerly smiling orchards assumed a desolate look ; his garden began to show signs of neglect, and it became painfully evident to his wife that a change had come over him.

Then it was that Mrs. Lyle used all her woman's arts and blandishments to soothe his dissatisfied mind, and obtain from him the cause of his strange abstraction.

On the evening in question Lyle's discontent became more painfully manifest than ever. He had been to the neighboring village that day upon some business connected with the farm, and had there met with a friend, who was also intimate with the Benedicks, and who had just returned from the city, where he had been feasted and entertained by Pryce in a manner that had at once put a damper upon all the usual allurements of a rural life.

"There's no reason," he said to Lyle, who was somewhat excited by the picture, "why we should not be as lucky as the Benedicks. We've a little money salted down, and almost as good as idle for our purposes, and we've about as much 'cuteness, I imagine, as Pryce has. I've made up *my* mind—I'm going to the city, let who will stay behind."

## CHAPTER III.

## THE FALSE STEP.

LYLE went home with his mind in a perfect chaos. The splendid town residence of the Benedicks—who had recently built a fine villa in his vicinity, and had given out that they were coming there to ruralize that summer—the luxury in which his old friend Pryce was described as living—obtained a firm hold upon his imagination. Ambition had taken root within him, and Peace was extinguished for ever.

“Why, Walter, what has come over you?” said his wife, with an anxious expression on her countenance—heretofore a stranger to such emotions. “You used to be noted as the most cheerful and contented person in the valley. What could have occurred to change you so?”

“I have been thinking, Mary,” he replied, “of the many happy hours we have passed beneath this roof, and how many poor creatures there are in this world who would consider a position like ours only too great a luxury.”

“And yet, there is nothing in all this to make you gloomy. There is something behind all this, I am sure. You are dissatisfied with something, or you would not be so strangely altered.”

"Well, then—how penetrating you women are"—he said, half-laughingly, "*I am* dissatisfied, I confess."

"For shame, Walter! Has not Heaven been liberal of its favors? have we not all we want? and would it not be a crime to ask for more?"

"Truly, wife, we have reason to be thankful to Providence for its favors. But times are altering, Mary, and what was a competence a while ago, is little or nothing now. If we were alone we need have no care for the future, but we have children, and it is on their account that I am troubled."

"I do not understand you exactly. Our farm is not large enough, perhaps."

"Oh, our farm is large enough, but then it is not exactly the thing. Most of our old neighbors have long ago come to the same conclusion, and are no doubt flourishing in the city beyond our ideas. I own that I should like to build up as bright a prospect for Violet and our little Harry, as our friend Pryce is building for his children."

"You do not, surely, propose to part with the farm, Walter?"

"Why, no, Mary, it is not necessary exactly to do that?"

"Thank God!" she ejaculated, fervently.

"But it may become necessary for us to forsake it for awhile. In fact—and this is the first secret I have ever kept from you—I have already written to Pryce about the matter, and he approves very highly of my intentions. We will merely draw him a mortgage upon the property, and with the money thus obtained, we will go to the city, and imitate his example."



"You talk, Walter, as if the thing was already done. You forget that Pryce had wealthy parents to assist him, and a business already made to his hands."

"That is nothing, where one is determined," rejoined Lyle. "I flatter myself that I am as able and intelligent as Pryce Benedick, and that shall make up what I want in capital."

Mrs. Lyle was devoted to her husband, and not less so to her home, but she had made it a principle to follow his guidance in all things, and she would not dispute with him even now. For a little time she held out, displaying before him every argument that she could think of to induce him to change his mind; but he was so set in his determination, that she saw at once it was useless to dissuade him further.

A letter received from Benedick, and shortly after a visit in person from that important personage, confirmed him in his resolution, and the farm was mortgaged.

Lyle did not know how much he was in reality attached to the place, until the day had come when he was obliged to leave it. The last Sabbath had arrived which Lyle was to pass in the valley, and it was the first Sabbath in his life that had ever been to him so full of meaning. It was a day that the inhabitants of the spot were rarely known to disregard, and on this occasion they appeared to have turned out in unusual numbers.

It was a pleasing sight to observe, the disjointed procession of rustics—as they pursued their customary route toward the little church which served as a place of worship to all the honest farmers for miles around. Their attire, plain but neat

to a degree ; the cheerful air worn by their respective countenances ; the meaning glances of the younger couples, who had evidently profited by the command that they should "love their neighbors as themselves," and showed it accordingly ; the vigilant looks of the seniors, who, notwithstanding, cared not to interfere with their love-making ; the unrestrained prattling of the children ; the clear and musical tones of the church bell, which might be heard, small though it was, from one end of the valley to the other, and was its dearest music ; the brilliant colors of the flowers and the redundancy of the foliage ; the twittering of hundreds of birds, whose tiny voices were mingled with the bubbling sound of many a sparkling spring and rivulet ; and over all, the clear unclouded sky and brilliant sun lent to the scene an aspect of enchantment, worth all the spectacles the world ever produced.

All these things Walter Lyle had noticed over and again ; he was familiar with every bird, and bush, and tree. There was not a single landmark with which he was unacquainted. He had passed all these things many a time unnoticed, but now nothing escaped his attention. His friends crowded around him at the church, astonished at the news ; all were more warm in their demeanor than he had known them before. Some congratulated him and declared that they meant to follow his example. Others wished him success, but shook their heads ominously at the prospect, while some openly lectured him for his egregious folly. Lyle went home, strange to say, with a feeling of dread at his heart.

How the Old Homestead loomed up to his vision now! Rude as it was, it now appeared a palace. He was astonished that he had before been so unobservant of the beauties of the place he had called his own. His wife stopped him for a moment at the threshold, and looking confidently into his preoccupied countenance, said—

“Walter, the thing is done, and it’s of no use repining. I know everything that has been passing in your mind this last half hour; but trust me, hope and confidence will now be more in place than vain regrets. In this place we were brought up—in this place were passed the happy hours of our courtship. Let us never, under whatever vicissitudes, dear Walter, forget the good Old Homestead; but, while striving for the best, let us indulge in a hope that no worse fate may overtake us than to lay our bones in a spot consecrated by so many memories.”

A brighter look passed over his countenance as she concluded.

“With such a wife,” he said, “to aid me in carrying out my plans, I have nothing to fear!”

## CHAPTER IV.

## CHRISTMAS EVE IN TOWN.

It was the night before Christmas. Snow lay upon the sidewalks to the depth of several inches, and the unsparing wind went whistling through keyholes and crevices with a dismal sound, whirling the falling flakes in clouds against the frosted window-panes—where they seemed to melt and fall back from the brightness that streamed from within. Mamma, with her knitting or her quiet game of whist; Estelle with the latest gilded annual; the children with their toys—even that once revered, but now quite commonplace member of the household whom we used to venerate under the title of “father,” but whom, not to be behind the times, we now designate as the “old gentleman,” or “the governor,” do not mind the pattering without, but consider that it adds somewhat to the cheerfulness within. The lights glitter gaily, nevertheless, in the elegant windows of shops that seem to grow plethoric with piled-up luxuries of every kind and hue, while here and there a gleam of ruddy light shines out from the ornamented casements of some aristocratic dwelling upon the murky atmosphere, and the thrilling laugh of the gay and beautiful mingles its tones with the notes of dulcet music and the voice of the wintry wind.

Oh ! those pleasant evenings before Christmas ! How they loom up in our memories, freighted with so many reminiscences of good and ill ! What a wealthy store of recollections lies treasured in the cabinet of the heart, awaiting the return of each succeeding Christmas Eve to recall them in all their brightness to our minds. Happy are they to whom, at the winding up of every year, occur such thoughts as these ; and happy, in every sense of the word, was Mr. Pryce Benedick, who, on the night in question, turned from the door of a well-known curiosity shop in one of the great thoroughfares of the modern Babel, loaded down with a supply of "sundries," intended for distribution among the favored ones at home.

Pleasant thoughts of the delight with which his appearance would be welcomed by his rather numerous family, and of the comfortable fireside (how comfortable, with its polished bars and heaps of glowing Liverpool ! ) around which they were grouped, in eager anticipation of his coming, passed rapidly through his mind, and added fresh agility to his steps. He had not forgotten his wife among the rest, as a magnificent shawl, snugly stowed away beneath his arm, bore ample and convincing testimony.

But Pryce lived a long way off, and the stages were full ; and even had this not been the case, his parcels would have been in the way (you never caught Pryce trusting anything to the driver, since the day when one of the fraternity chiselled him out of a "fip"). A shorter cut through some by-streets would materially diminish the distance, and, besides, he should save the amount of his fare ; so Pryce

drew his well-lined cloak more closely about him, and was soon lost in the intricacies of one of the many darkly-lighted streets, lying between Broadway and that Boulevards of the eastern side, the Bowery.

The intricacies and entanglements of that particular portion of the Metropolis have proved a source of annoyance and vexation to more than one advocate of city reform and straight thoroughfares, and they became on this occasion not less so to Mr. Pryce Benedick. The snow, driving against the exposed portions of his face (there were no brilliant lights in the windows here, and the cold seemed possessed of a ten-fold greater intensity) almost blinded him, and when he was at length enabled, during a temporary lull in the storm, to look around him, he found himself in a quarter of the city to him totally unknown. His walks had always taken him in pleasant places, and now that he found himself transplanted, as if by magic, to a spot where all the accounts that he had read of city destitution and city distress, were in some degree realized, he was as a sleep-walker suddenly restored to his senses.

The neighborhood into which the evil genius of Pryce Benedick had led him was not, to say the least of it, of a character to inspire with confidence many a bolder and less scrupulous man than he. In fact, he had, without knowing it, thrust himself into the very heart of that American St. Giles's, the Five Points, and every effort that he made to effect his release seemed only to bewilder him the more. To add to his confusion, the storm was momentarily increasing, and, in spite of

his comfortable clothing, his teeth began to chatter, and an ague seemed to have taken possession of his limbs. A luminous idea occurs to him : he will call on the police. "Holloa !"

A few repetitions of that experiment convince him that he might call upon the walls themselves with as reasonable expectation of their answering. As if to aggravate the horrors of his situation, a vision of that comfortable home where his wife and little ones are so anxiously looking for his coming steals across his perplexed and agitated mind, and almost maddens him by the contrast.

All at once he stops, and as he does so, a hand is laid upon his arm. Its touch is a gentle one, but Mr. Benedick jumps aside, and staggers as if he had been struck with a slung-shot. They had paused underneath the only street-lamp within sight, and as Pryce hurriedly scrutinized the countenance before him, he felt somewhat, though not wholly, reassured. It was that of a girl, not more than fifteen years of age—perhaps not that—with a face which might have been called handsome, had it not been for a look expressive of care, which imparted to her features an old and faded expression. Her garments—if garments we may call them—were scanty, and so ragged that they could scarce be kept together. A miserable apology for shoes hardly served to protect her stockingless feet, and she had only a threadbare and tattered shawl to shield her young head from the pitiless pelting of the elements.

"Well, then, young woman," Pryce managed to say, after he had scrutinized her sufficiently to feel assured that she

could do him no harm: "what do you want in the streets at such a time, and in such weather, too?"

"Oh! sir," she answered, "mother is ill and dying." And there she stopped, as if the very thought had deprived her of the power of utterance; but her eyes were fixed upon the rich man's face with a look that told, in a glance, what volumes could not have conveyed: a long history of family wretchedness and privation. But it did not particularly impress our friend Pryce, who seemed quite indignant at being stopped in that manner, and demanded of the girl, in not the softest tone of voice, we are afraid, "what had he to do with her mother's illness?"

"I beg pardon, sir," she replied, timidly—perceiving that she had offended him—"but we were not always so, sir. Father has seen better times, and only for being very unfortunate—"

"He might have been fortunate, I suppose. Aye, aye—that's the old burthen of the song," retorted Benedick, with a fresh shiver; "but I mustn't stand here any longer, or I shall never reach home alive, unless it's on a shutter."

"Home, sir: have you got a home? how happy you must be!"

Benedick paused in extricating his coat from the grasp of the child, and looked at her with something like an expression of pity in his countenance. After all, he thought it possible that there might be some who had no home, and his own experience in street-walking for the last few minutes caused him to have a faint idea of what the feelings might be of such an



unfortunate. "No home, eh? that's bad, my child—very bad, my little girl. If it was only a single room, now, or even an attic—"

Mr. Benedick had not the faintest idea of the straits to which the poor are sometimes reduced in that last stage of helplessness which is the joint product of disease and want. The various charitable associations of the city were amply competent, he imagined, to alleviate the distress of the penniless, and where these were not accessible, the Alms House and the Hospital, must surely, he thought, be sufficient. Mr. Benedick had not been a very close observer of human nature, it must be allowed. Occupied from his earliest manhood with the duties of the counting-room, to the exclusion of all other pursuits, he had never taken the trouble to examine into those simple annals of the poor, which go farther than all the homilies ever written to convince us of the uncertainty of all sublunary things, and to make us doubt whether, with all the boasted Christianity and civilization of the age, we are any better off in the scale of humanity than our red-skinned brethren, who are accused of being familiar only with deeds of cruelty, and who, it is even said of them, do not at times object to a dish of "cold clergyman," by way of dessert. At the time of which we write, neither he, nor the clergy, nor all the humanitarian philosophers in a small way, who make the trials and vicissitudes of human nature their hobby, and sometimes their livelihood, had dreamt of diving into the miserable garrets, and still more miserable cellars, wherein the children of poverty hold high carnival in their rags, to ascertain

what might be done for them, and thus it became impossible to realize their situation in the full extent of its horrors.

So, when the child spoke of home, in a way that brought tears into her eyes, if it did not into his, he became suspicious that all was not right with regard to her morals, and hurriedly thrusting his hand into his pocket he pulled forth a dime, which he gave her without the slightest qualm of conscience, and bidding her advise her father to apply to the Alms House without delay, he tore himself from the irresolute grasp of that childish hand, and was soon lost to her view in the darkness.

## CHAPTER V.

## A PICTURE OF LIFE—AND DEATH.

IN the very heart of the city—blocking up the transit across it in such a manner that it would seem to have been laid out especially as a hindrance to those whom business or pleasure might lead in either direction, and affording naturally a focus or centre for all the filth and wickedness of that region—nestles a spot, the fame of which has grown to be almost as familiar to the ears of our country neighbors as to those of the worthy legislators under whose paternal care it has become one of the most flourishing institutions of our beloved island. In other parts of the town, vice is only tolerated because it is found to be difficult of removal, because it is but new to the neighborhoods to which it has been transferred; or, possibly, because the attention of the authorities has not yet been sufficiently aroused to the necessity for its extermination. Here it is encouraged in all its hideous deformity. The Five Points is a vast manufactory of crime in all its phases—a Moral Lazar House, where corruption has full sway, from the incipient stages in which it first becomes recognizable under a name to those in which it blossoms forth perennially, like the fabled Upas—every bough bearing seeds which fall to the ground

only to produce in turn their crop of villany and licentiousness, or are borne upon the wings of the wind to scatter broadcast the pernicious influence which may now be seen in vigorous existence on every hand of us—penetrating even into our halls of legislation—into quarters where public responsibility was heretofore considered an efficient safeguard against its snares.

Custom, it may be well said, reconciles us to many things which, were they suddenly presented to us for the first time for our acceptance or approval, would be recoiled from with loathing and disgust, proportioned to the importance of the subject. If such a plague-spot as the Five Points had hitherto been unknown among us, and a scheme for the establishment of such an “institution” were to be unexpectedly thrust upon our notice by some alderman or legislator of the year 1853, or some place-hunting Congressman of the present writing, how many voters, does the reader imagine, could be found to support such a bill? None! is the indignant reply; not one!

We rejoice to think that there is even so much morality yet unextinguished in our midst. We will license the third tier, the dram shop and the brothel—we will wink at the gambling dens and gilded saloons of our thousand sportsmen and ten thousand Cyprians—we will slumber over the idea of slavery and its concomitant horrors, and we will continue to build penitentiaries and prisons for the reception of the wretched outcasts whom we have so largely contributed to fit for their final degradation. But we will not, with our eyes

open, countenance anything that looks vicious or immoral. Does not the Reverend Mr. Smiler statedly expatiate to his open-mouthed (but close-eared) congregation, as well as the famous popular lecturer, Mr. Gammon, to his admiring audiences, upon the increasing civilization, wisdom and morality of the age? And are we going so seriously to damage our natural self-love, and abnegate facts, as to tell them that they are mistaken—that both Mr. Smiler and Mr. Gammon, on such occasions, wear colored spectacles to view the world through? We fear, after all, that there is very little of Bacon in our friend Gammon's philosophy. Speak of the Five Points to one of the City Fathers, a hundred years hence, and he'll hardly believe you.

If there be any to whom our meaning is not yet rendered plain, a walk of brief duration through the locality we have mentioned will dispel the gratifying picture drawn by the Gammons and the Smilers of our day, and lead, perhaps, a few to look upon society in the true light in which it should be presented to their view. Composed, for the most part, of a collection of filthy and time-worn buildings, many of which contain a dozen families, and comprising within its limits what might have been (and may still be) rendered the finest and most valuable portion of the island, the Five Points is a city within itself; its inhabitants a community speaking the same language, but having very few traits of character in common with those around them. Nothing can be more complete than their isolation from the rest of society. Like that of similar places in the larger European cities, this popu-

lation is composed of the very dregs of humankind : the thief and the receiver, called, in the diction of the police reports, his fence—the pawn-broker, the dealer in second-hand goods, and the dram-seller—the keeper of the den of infamy and the dance-house—these are the aristocrats of the place ; thrusting daily and hourly, under cognizance (we had almost said, by authority), of the law, their infernal wiles in the paths of the desolate and down-trodden herd who, at the acme of their sufferings, find a refuge here, and spend in drunkenness and riot the small amount of their earnings as long-shore-men, rag-pickers, and the like.

EVIL, in brief, is the predominating influence of the place, although here and there an honest sempstress, or a decayed artisan may be found ; the most horrible passions, the most sensual desires, the most atrocious villanies are there engendered ; not, as in the more accessible and better-peopled districts, by night, but in the free and open light of heaven. Vice—a thing to be glossed over everywhere—is a matter of commerce here. Poverty of the bitterest description stares from uncovered vaults and sashless windows ; cellars of common resort and doors of dilapidated corner-groceries seem gaping for their prey. At the principal entrance to this modern Avernus—a fitting portal for the place—the city prison, more appropriately named, “The Tombs,” rears its dull walls against the leaden sky.

Leaving Pryce Benedick to find his way homeward as well as he might, the child turned her steps toward that part of the Points now occupied by the Mission House, but then

given over without let or hindrance to the soul-killing purposes of the Old Brewery.

In front of this edifice a few faint gleams of light, struggling with difficulty from the oil lamps of the street to the dirty pavement, disclosed a crowd of people, who, grouped in little knots of two or three, gazed with looks of curiosity, not unmingled with fear, at the tenement in question. The cause of this gathering was a succession of shrieks, evidently uttered by some person in the greatest distress: at one moment, ringing out loud and clear upon the air in the wildest accents of mortal anguish, and the next subsiding into a series of low convulsive moans, that were almost as terrible to listen to. At times, these cries would cease altogether, and figures might be detected flitting at intervals about the windows.

In this building was transpiring one of those fearful scenes which rob life of the gaudy colors in which the pen of the author and the pencil of the artist have delighted to dress it, and hold it forth in its most sickening aspect—a frightful reality! In an apartment on the highest floor of the building known as the Brewery, some dozen or more of persons were congregated to witness the last struggles of an unfortunate, whose spirit was at that moment escaping from its mortal tenement. The walls of this wretched place were covered with a damp exhalation, which had bestowed upon them, in combination with the smoke of a century, a hue in which the original color was hardly discernible. In many places the plastering was intersected by innumerable cracks,

the lodging-places of a horde of loathsome insects—while in others it had entirely fallen away, exposing to view the rough discolored bricks.

A broken chair, a rickety table, and a few of the most indispensable articles for domestic use, were the only evidences of furniture which met the eye, and upon a wretched straw pallet in the corner was stretched a woman, or rather the faint outline of one, whose incessant ravings and restless movements would seem to mark the ravages of some fatal disease.

The scene was a striking one, and was evidently not without its effect upon the miscellaneous assemblage that had crowded about the bedside to witness the last moments of an erring fellow-being. Yet all this did not prevent the sounds of a fiddle, the stamping of rough-shod feet, and the noise of Bacchanalian voices from piercing to where the dying woman lay.

By her side, with one of her small skinny hands firmly clasped in his own, sat a man in his shirt-sleeves, whose countenance showed too plainly that hunger and disease had also been busy there. His countenance had once been handsome, but want had stamped the high forehead with her unmistakable seal, and left, instead of the natural frank expression, a look of dogged defiance. The only bright feature in the picture was the girl whom we have observed in conversation with Benedick. She had entered the room unperceived by any of those more immediately about the bed, and as she fell on her knees at the side of her mother, the disen-



gaged hand resting in her own, and her eyes, although streaming with tears, upturned to heaven, an angel seemed to have alighted among the little group of watchers. Among all the misery and abandonment of the place, the Silent Appeal was not forgotten—at least, by one !

“She teaches us our duty at the last hour,” muttered the man who had caught the girl’s phrenzied motion—“Let us pray !”

For some moments a deep silence reigned throughout the apartment. The sick woman seemed to comprehend the meaning of the stillness, and to join in the devotion. Then eyes that had been unused for many a year to the melting mood streamed with tears, and more than one sob was heard among the female portion of the spectators. Who knows what long-forgotten dreams that sonorous “Let us pray” had summoned afresh into existence ? What happy homes and quiet hearths, and sports of early, innocent childhood its magic might have called into being in minds long since grown callous, it was supposed, to such impressions ? The incense of such tears ascends to the judgment-seat, and will be set to their credit at the final reckoning !

The silence is broken by the woman. Her eyes are seemingly fixed in a vacant stare, but something must have attracted her attention, to make her gaze so earnestly and long. At last, the feeble lids are lowered—the eyes, that are growing dimmer with each succeeding breath, rest for a moment upon a miniature that lies upon the counterpane, where it has seemingly fallen from her hands. For a single moment the faint look of those waning orbs brightens,—they close again, and death has claimed his own !

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE RESULT OF A FALSE STEP.

AFTER all, a death more or less makes little difference—at least to the great world which is throbbing and bustling around us. Scarcely has the curtain descended on this drama of a life (in this case it has proved a failure, and the Great Author has revoked his unappreciated work), when fresh sounds of merriment disturb the silence of that gloomy chamber. A roar of laughter, called forth in all probability by some coarse attempt at wit, floats upward on the heavy atmosphere of the place. There is a renewed stamping of feet, as if the dancers feel no longer trammelled by the presence of departing mortality, and are eager to make up for their former constraint. The fiddle mews, whines and gurgles with increasing energy. Christmas Eve is a festival night in the Brewery, and tomorrow half the number may be dead, or imprisoned, or starving—who cares?

Dark as that apartment naturally was, it had grown dimmer since the departure of her who had been the lone man's constant comfort in sickness and adversity, as well as in days when the sun shone not quite so dimly upon the fortunes of that little family. Few, out of the small number of those who had known and esteemed him in his hour

of prosperity, would have recognized in the disconsolate husband the once careless and contented Walter Lyle. To him the Familiar Spirit comes this night. But her face is sad, and a cloud rests upon her usually radiant forehead.

The story of the Lyles is but a repetition of that of thousands who had gone before them. Forgetful of the difference between their respective positions, Lyle had, immediately upon establishing himself in the city, set out to rival his friends, the Benedicks, in their splendor. Invited at first to their entertainments as an honored guest, he became possessed with a burning desire to equal, if not to excel, them, and the solid comforts of home were totally overlooked. He took a fine house in a fashionable part of the city, furnished it in the most elegant style, and began to cultivate the acquaintance of the rich and great. His business flourished, and it is not improbable that he might have succeeded had he been possessed of moderate views, but the dazzle and glitter of fashionable life had totally altered his nature. For awhile he stemmed the current. But hard times came—his own means were totally exhausted, and he failed. With him to fail was to be ruined, for Lyle was not a financier, and he was, besides, too honest to defraud his creditors of a single penny. He waited upon Benedick on the day the mortgage fell due, and then for the first time he learned how completely man is the creature of circumstances. Pryce was no longer the friend of other days. Times were hard upon him, too, he said; things were getting dearer every day, and his own family needed looking after;—in short, he was sorry, he was *very* sorry, but, he could

not, he did not see how he could consistently, renew the mortgage. Lyle, therefore, retired with reluctance from his handsome mansion, and took lodgings suited to his changed circumstances. His wife found something to do in the way of sewing; their boy, Harry, now getting to be quite a lad, went to sea before the mast (all his prospects of becoming a prince, or, what is the same to us, a millionaire, completely knocked in the head, as far as his father was concerned), and Lyle took a situation as journeyman carpenter—the only employment he could find, and the only avocation, except farming, with which he was at all acquainted. Violet, the pride of himself and his wife, as Harry was their hope, was all that remained to remind them of the happy hours that had vanished.

It were needless to recount with detail how the fortunes of that little family fluctuated. How industriously Mrs. Lyle worked to do her part in maintaining her child and husband, until her sight began to fail, and grey hairs began to mingle with her once raven tresses. How the little Violet grew in size and comeliness, and how anxiously they brooded over the tender child, who, sickly from her cradle, was now their all in all. Lyle's discouragements began to operate upon his health—a conflagration deprived them one day of what little they had saved from the wreck of their fortunes; and, to crown all, news came to them that their son had been lost at sea.

Lyle never recovered after this. He took to dissipated habits, went on from bad to worse; and, finally, brought up where we have found him.

The chamber of death is invested with an awful quietude which none but the most reckless or most unprincipled dare invade, and for a brief interval the sanctity of the place is regarded.

For more than an hour Walter Lyle remained in the attitude in which we have seen him—his burning forehead buried in his attenuated hands, and a fever in his heart which no medicine of human devising might allay. He was awakened at length from his stupor by the girl, who had hitherto respected his grief too much to attempt to disturb it.

“Look up, father,” she said; “what does this mean? There are dark-looking men in the room, and the passage is full of them.”

Lyle looked up then for the first time since his wife had left him, and he comprehended but too readily the meaning of the intrusion. A man of middle age, with a round, coarse face, thickly covered with blotches, and attired in a flashy style, which marked him for a person of some importance in the neighborhood, approached him as soon as he gave an indication of returning consciousness, and addressed him in a manner of which no better could be said than that it was in keeping with his dress. He was well-provided with the usual assortment of imitation jewelry, and he carried in his mouth a lighted pipe—his custom whenever he visited his tenants in person, lest he might fall a victim to the contagion which every year hurried so many of them to the Potter’s Field.

“I say, neighbor,” he exclaimed, when Lyle appeared in a fit condition to listen to him, “you appear to be in bad luck, just now, and, as a man and a brother, I feel sorry for you.

It's only natural to do so; but then it's likewise natural that I should want to know who my tenants are, and what their means are of paying me, before I allow them to take possession of my premises."

"That's all very reasonable," responded Lyle, "but, surely, you might have chosen another time to tell me this."

"That's *your* opinion," retorted the landlord, whose name was Flint, in his most insulting manner; "but it isn't mine. You see, neighbor, the case is just this: I go and make a little money, and put it into a house and lot, and spend more money in repairs on it, and let it out to lodgers. Besides all that, the expense of repairin' it ain't no trifle, and when hardly a one of my lodgers but falls sick before he's been here a fortnight, and leaves his precious carcass for me to look after (they're all the time a falling sick, notwithstanding I keep a licker bar and a restorant to accommodate 'em), you'll acknowledge, that to board and lodge 'em for nothin' is more than can reasonably be expected of human nature. So, I thought as I was in the vicinity I'd just drop up and let you know my sentiments: that's the long and short of it."

"Why trouble yourself to inform me of that with which I was already acquainted?" replied Lyle, whose indignation rendered it impossible for him to treat the man civilly.

"Hooray! here's independence for you!" said Flint, appealing to his friends, in a manner intended to be sarcastic. "Maybe he thinks its the Fourth o' July, and not Christmas. Perhaps, sir," he added, turning rather fiercely upon his tenant—"perhaps, sir, you'll be so good as to pay what you owe

me, or let me know when I can have these apartments. I know a poor but respectable family that wants them as soon as you leave."

"I have no money, and I confess that I have done you wrong in occupying your premises without the means of paying for them," answered Lyle, dejectedly. "But what could I do? My wife was ill—dying in the street as I almost thought, and my own failing strength debarred all hope of employment. My poor child, too, was perishing from the cold, and"—

"And so you come in here at a venture, I suppose. I've no doubt you thought this port as good as any other in a storm. Of course, you never heard of such a place as the Alms House?"

"The Alms House!" echoed Lyle, with a shudder, which showed plainly in what light he regarded it.

"Yes—just that; the Alms House. And a mighty comfortable place it is, too, I can tell you; with ten governors to look after and provide for it, and nothing to pay for your vittels, let alone the lodging. Then, look at the air, too, and the company—and the—the—all those sort of things, you know, almost as good as you'd get here by payin' for them."

"No, no—the Alms House—the Alms House is the last resort," muttered Lyle, scarcely conscious that others heard him. "When my poor mother used to hold that up to me as a thing to be avoided, little did I think that I should ever be in a condition to need its mercies. But I will not fall into the common error by reproaching Providence for troubles of

my own creating. I have erred, and I am justly punished. Oh ! that fatal mistake !”

“Come,” said Flint, impatiently ; “what’s all this you’re mumbling about Providence and troubles ? I’ve got nothing to do with Providence or your troubles. If you’re too poor to live without labor, work ; if you’re too sick to work, beg ; if you’re too proud to beg—hum ! you know what I mean.”

“Steal, I suppose, you would say. But I am not quite so far gone as that. There is yet one resource left me before that.”

“You know your own affairs best,” replied Flint. “But I can’t wait any longer. I left a quiet party o’ friends at cards, and I can’t afford to throw good pennies after bad, you know. My man, Job, there, will attend to your little business. As for me, I only came to give you a little piece of my sentiments, and so—good bye, Mister—Mister What’s-your-name !”

And, amid the merriment occasioned by this last sally, Mr. Flint made Lyle a mock obeisance, and left him to the company of his dead wife and Job, the Five Points’ collector.

It is five of the clock on Christmas morning, and everything even at that early hour wears a look of jollity and comfort. The groceries are already open, and busy clerks are covering every visible portion of their door fronts with greens and household necessities of every description. In like manner the butchers’ shops are decorated with their choicest store of fowl and flesh, tricked off with bright-hued ribbons and paper flowers. The variety stores are being swept with a view to a good day’s business. The taverns are among the first to



open; nay, many of them have been open through the night, and more than one ruby nose is seen issuing, like its prototype the sun, from those portals of iniquity.

A tall gaunt figure stops at the corner of Orange and Cross streets, holding by the hand a trembling child (trouble has invested Violet with the fortitude of her elders, and she does not cry). For a moment he gazes up and down the long streets with an uncertainty that would seem to denote that he is not quite settled in his mind, and then, drawing the girl closer to him, he totters on in his misery.

Only a solitary being out of all the number who have passed him in their holiday attire, bent upon making the most of the day, has deigned to notice him. It is a policeman. He crosses the street from his post to where Lyle is standing, and exclaims:

"Holloa! where now, old one?"

"To the grave!" replies Lyle, in hollow accents.

"I wish you a pleasant journey there!" rejoins the Star, and perching himself on a hydrant, he becomes absorbed in the columns of the *Police Investigator*—forgetful that such people as Lyle are even in existence.

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## CHAPTER VII.

## REPUBLICAN SIMPLICITY.

IF life has its thorns, it has its flowers also, and as a rose-bush is one of the most beautiful objects in nature, when viewed at a distance, while it is likewise one of the most dangerous to come in contact with, so fashionable life, while concealing within itself an antidote to the peace and happiness of all who enter its charmed circle, presents, nevertheless, to the inexperienced, a group of fascinations glossed over with a supernatural coloring, that invests it with an attraction which few have the strength of mind to resist. There is something in it which recalls very forcibly a well-known Italian story (of course, one of the *Gesta Romanorum*,) in which a young devotee of fashion pursues for years with his attentions a lady possessed, to all appearance, of every personal attraction. In figure, complexion, and grace she is unexceptionable. There is but one drawback: the lady wears continually an impervious mask (it will be remembered that we are treating of another age and clime, for no one in *our* society presumes to wear a mask). To induce her to remove this hateful disguise is the lover's constant aim, but all his most urgent entreaties, devices and stratagems are unsuccessful, until, after ruining

health and fortune in the unavailing pursuit, the poor youth, on his dying bed, accomplishes his wish. His inamorata removes her mask, and discloses—a death's head!

After this the young man expires, as any one else would do under similar circumstances. The story, after all, like a great many others, is not all a fiction.

The fine mansion to which Mr. Pryce Benedick betook himself, after escaping from the unpleasant dilemma previously noticed, offered a striking contrast to the miserable rookery from which we have recently seen his old acquaintance—the sworn friend of his boyhood—ignominiously expelled. Lyle, in surrendering a home where he was surrounded by every comfort, and by those endearing recollections which to the honest man are far more valuable than the weightiest money-bags of any one of our merchant-princes, had committed the only fatal error of his life. Lacking the tact, and we may add, the selfishness of his more fortunate fellows, he was soon involved in irretrievable ruin, while Benedick, by reason of his worldly bringing up and the possession of natural qualifications for a business career, prospered even beyond his hopes, and was soon enabled to live in a style that rendered him the envy and the admiration of many of his wealthiest compeers, and the object of secret detraction to not a few. Strange as it may appear, his speculative propensities and the desire for the accumulation of additional riches kept pace with and even outran his success—so that even Mr. Pryce Benedick, with all his luxury of living and his proud position, was not satisfied.

The residence of Pryce was one of the finest in the city. It was, in fact, a palace. One of the first of foreign architects had been employed in its erection, and the work of foreign artists was visible in whatever direction you might turn your eyes. His drawing-rooms were hung with costly pictures, brought from abroad, and every apartment was clogged and lumbered by the accumulation of piled-up luxuries from every clime. To display all these treasures to the gaze of admiring friends was the chief object in life of Mrs. Pryce Benedick. For this her pew in church was the handsomest and most conspicuous. For this she attired her daughters in a manner that threw all their rivals into a flutter of jealousy, but would have incurred the unmitigated ridicule of any European drawing-room, the manners of whose frequenters they flattered themselves they were imitating.

What were the true characters of many of the visitors for whose gratification all this display was made it were as well not to inquire too curiously. Suffice it to say, that more than one foreign roué (yes, and some of home production even) exiled by his misconduct from the circles in which he should have moved, obtained there an easy entrance by the mere possession of an empty title, or a handful more or less of the filthy lucre.

Hitherto, Pryce had given all his thoughts and energies solely to business, as became a man of the world and the father of an interesting family. Now, however, his attention begins to be about equally divided between his worldly pursuits and his eldest daughter, Julia, just arriving at a

marriageable age, and ready to be put up for sale, in compliance with modern usage, to the highest bidder.

In one of those agreeable and quiet thoroughfares in the upper part of the city, not far removed from Broadway, and in the immediate vicinity of that fashionable summer promenade yeleft Union Square, stood, and, for aught we know to the contrary, still stands a row of elegant dwellings, the mere appearance of which suggested to the mind of the observer ideas of wealth and splendor without limit. It is to one of these dwellings that we would draw the attention of the reader. Look within, and you will find it elegantly furnished with sofas, divans, ottomans, and all that the upholsterer's art can do to make it vie with others in the gorgeousness of its interior attractions. Rich Turkey carpets invite the tread, and articles of vertu and bijouterie adorn the mantels. It is evidently the residence of one of those merchant princes whose enterprise and energy have made New York the city that she is. In fact, it is the residence of Mr. Pryce Benedick.

And no one is more wide awake to the fact of his own importance, as well as that of the class to which he belongs, than Benedick, himself—whose ships, at the moment of which we write, are circumnavigating half the globe, and whose wealth is reported to be without limit. In person, Mr. Benedick is tall, rather inclining to the corpulent, and straight as a poker. His face is smooth, round, and without a wrinkle—telling of good living, and the absence of those petty cares that *will* step in to disturb the minds of the com-

monest of people. He is dignified—but that is due to his wealth; he is exclusive—but nothing less could be expected of one moving in such circles as those in which he moves. He also prides himself upon his honesty; and no bill is presented a second time for payment at his counting-house.

Benedick's family consisted of himself and wife, a son just arrived at the very old age of twenty, and two accomplished daughters, Julia and Helen—one of whom was now about to enter upon the pleasures and duties of womanhood, while the other was but just emerging from her teens.

Mr. Maximus Benedick (or Maximus Benedick, Esq., as his friends in the superscriptions of their notes are in the habit of styling him), although by no means the possessor of talents to distinguish him from any ordinary individual, is yet sufficiently a character to sit for his portrait. Notwithstanding he had but just emerged from his teens, as we have said, Max was already thoroughly posted up with regard to the superficial life of the great emporium. Of the inner life of things, and of the various emotions which entered into the composition of his fellow-beings, he had not the remotest conception. Having been brought up in the full consciousness of his family's importance, and early initiated into the airs and graces of fashionable life, Max conceived his taste for everything savoring of idleness or pleasure, and his disgust for the ordinary pursuits of the world at one and the same moment. In the eyes of his casual acquaintance, he was a pattern young man. His clothes sat upon his delicate little figure as if some poor artist had devoted his life to their

perfection. Lemon-colored kid gloves—No. 6—encased his “pooty” hands; little boots of soft morocco enveloped his feet; a little watch-chain dangled from his vest; a pair of little pantaloons, so tight that they imparted to his legs an appearance of being “straight all the way down,” and glowing with all the colors of a lady’s shawl, adorned his nether man. But his coat was large enough for two of his size, and his hat seemed tumbling over on one side from its exceeding height and heaviness. Below, he was the counterpart of a spider seen through a microscope. Above, he was like the famous ichthyosaurus, all shoulders.

In his daily intercourse with the crowd he was reserved even to haughtiness. No greater number of words, in fact, at any time escaped him than was absolutely necessary to denote his personal wants. He never appeared astonished at anything, never seemed to have felt a regard for anybody, and never expressed an admiration for any object—to do so being considered a mark of ill-breeding. A superb picture or a rich landscape never called from him any manifestation of delight. Only, he sometimes stopped to render homage to a handsome countenance. He appeared afraid that the slightest exhibition of natural feeling should escape him. Selfish as a miser, and destitute of vitality as a stone, he had, of course, no friends. Sensuality was his presiding genius, and money the welcome means for its gratification.

Of his dissipation, his over-indulgence in wine, his late hours, his rage for fast horses and fine clothes, and his eager pursuit—in a genteel way—of a hundred sports and pleasures

which, in any but the son of the man of wealth, would be regarded as sending him straight to perdition, we will not particularly speak. The reader has already more than one Maximus Benedick in his eye, and one of the number will serve as a portrait for the rest.

A lovely neice, the daughter of a deceased brother, who had left her to the care of Pryce (so *he* gave out) as the only legacy in his power to bestow—a favor of which the recipient did not, by the way, seem to be remarkably proud—made up the little circle; but she, like most poor relations, was so little mentioned, that few save their most intimate friends ever dreamed of her existence.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## STARTING IN LIFE.

MRS. B. is a counterpart of her husband. Although she came of no very wealthy family herself—her father having been originally a grocer in a modest way—(but tell it not in Gath!)—she has a proper idea of her lord's position; and, if she is more proud, more vain, and more extravagant than he, it is only for the sake of *keeping up the credit of the family*. Happy are they who may obtain an invitation to Mrs. Benedick's *reunions*—as she politely styles them; thrice happy they who may share for a single night her box at the opera—of which Mistress Benedick is a patron.

Up to the time of their introduction to the reader, however, the life of the Benedicks had been, comparatively speaking, little else than a blank; yet, not a blank, either, if a constant succession of soirées and other-like fashionable dissipations may be called anything. But the time had now arrived when the head of the family had decided, in the pride of his heart and the fullness of his pockets, that his daughter—heiress to his affections and his wealth—should make her first curtsy to the fashionable world, of which it was his intention that she should form a part.

Everything in the family mansion, movable or immovable,

had been submitted to a thorough overhauling ; the chairs, divans, etc., had been revarnished and revamped—new carpets laid in place of the old ones, from which the pristine gloss had scarce been worn ; the panelings of the halls and parlors were repainted—the upholsterer once more set at work ; even the silver door-plate, bearing the aristocratic dissyllable, *Benedick*, had been so diligently varnished, that one might see every lineament as in a mirror. For a whole week preceding the momentous occasion, servants were seen continually issuing from the dwelling with packages of cards and notes neatly folded—the sure precursors of some great event. A smile was seen to loom upon the face of the gratified merchant ; and he even so far forgot himself, upon one occasion, as to bow to an old friend in slender circumstances, whom, for years past, he had made it his habit to give the “go-by” in the street.

At last, the day, big with fate, arrives ; a carriage trundles up to the door of the family mansion, and a slender, but elegant female figure, closely veiled, springs lightly from the vehicle, followed by a poodle, and a servant-maid with a sleepy look, and an exceedingly slouchy bonnet. The veiled figure has embraced, in succession, “pa,” and “ma,” and a host of anxious relatives, married and unmarried, who have gathered in the portico to receive the long expected one ; then commences the work of disgorging ; and, straightway, as if by magic, the vehicle is made to give up baskets, bundles, boxes, and packages—several trunks, and an assortment of band-boxes, most of them in a hopeless condition from the pressure. And then, when the hack has rolled away, and the doors are closed.

how noisy the family group that has gathered within. The parlors swarm with friends and relatives. Released from the durance vile entailed upon her by a clumsy country bonnet, and clothes to match, the heiress stands forth in all the freshness of her girlish beauty, and modestly receives the congratulations that are poured in upon her from all quarters.

Julia is a tall, dark-eyed girl, of scarce sixteen, with a little awkwardness in her gestures and bearing—such as might be expected in a young lady fresh from the restraints and petty formalities of a boarding-school. Nevertheless, she is beautiful; and as she stands by the crackling fire—for it is November, and the season is growing cold—she will compare well with any of her sex within the crowded room.

Now, if, at this juncture, the young lady could have been left a little to the guidance of Dame Nature, although half-spoiled by the petty artificialities of a modern fashionable boarding-school, she might have turned out an intellectual, high-minded, gifted woman. As it was, even her gay and careless disposition rendered her a rather difficult subject for a proud father to operate upon; for, judging by Julia's ardent and impetuous manner, fashion will have but little chance of binding her artless mind in his deceptive fetters. But the material is fresh and susceptible of change; and who knows what a few months may accomplish?

Julia's tongue has been on the go ever since she entered the room, and it is many minutes ere she has recognised a childish form, that stands in a corner by herself, neglected and seemingly ready to break into tears at the oversight.

But her eyes have reached that dark corner, and in a moment it is no longer dark.

"Why, Alice, *ma belle cousine*—my pretty pet," exclaims Julia, running to the dark corner; and in an instant she has caught in her arms the figure of the neglected girl—of whose existence, but a few seconds previously, no one amid that swarm of human beings seemed aware.

Notwithstanding the frowns of her father, and a whispered remonstrance from the mother, Julia draws the trembling, downcast Alice from her retirement; and in a few minutes the two are deeply engaged in a rehearsal of their mutual pleasures and sorrows, in an opposite corner.

"The dear girl!" exclaims a foppishly-dressed individual, who seems made of essences, and who, from his familiarity, is evidently one of the family—"she is all soul—nothing selfish about her—not a particle!"

"Pray, who may the young lady be with whom she seems on such intimate terms?" asked a guest—a partial stranger to the family.

"Oh, she's nobody—nobody of consequence; a distant relation, dependent, or something of that sort," is the reply of the finikin gentleman; and this is all that is said with regard to her.

"Hang it, Jule!" whispered her brother, *sotto voce*, as he sauntered slowly by her for the purpose of performing what he considered a brotherly act—"don't make so much of little Alice. Everybody is looking at you."

"Well, and what of that?" asked Julia, at first not under-

standing him ; for Alice and she had been brought up as children together.

“ Why, privately, it does no harm,” he replied ; “ but in public, you see, it’s a different sort of thing. Our positions are different, you know, and—a—you understand.”

She *does* understand, and a deep blush mantles upon her countenance, as she finds herself yielding to a feeling of shame on account of her friendless cousin.

It will not add much to the reader’s knowledge to dwell materially upon the festivities of that particular night, nor to chronicle the thousand and one silly and absurd things that were said and done upon the happy occasion. We will not detail how the finikin gentleman aforesaid made a fool of himself, by toasting some fifty times the health of the heiress—nor how one Major Dabster, U. S. A., with fiery whiskers and a very military air, before the night had passed, became so oblivious as to mistake the occasion for a wedding, and to offer his congratulations to the astonished Julia, whom he insisted upon saluting as the bride. Suffice it, that, with these trivial exceptions, everything passed off as comfortably as could be desired, and when Julia went to rest that night, it was to dream of conquests and a life of fashion and excitement.

The maternal voice was heard at an early hour in the ensuing morning, summoning Julia to make her toilet and hasten down. On descending to the drawing-room, she found her father and mother waiting to receive her. Mr. Benedick was standing in his favorite posture in front of the

grate, with one hand half-concealed in the skirts of his coat, the other fumbling and playing with his watch-seals, as if he was perfectly aware of the importance of his position, and saw nothing uncommon in it.

The parental salutation being over, Julia was admonished that her mother had something important to communicate.

"Dear me, so early, too!" exclaimed Julia, playfully; "it must indeed be important, then. But I am all attention."

"I will not allude particularly," began the mother, "to your conduct in connection with that child Alice, my Julia; for, not having seen one another since you were children, the result was perfectly natural. But you must remember, my Julia, that to-day is the commencement of a new era in your life; and I trust," she added, with dignity, "in the affairs of the family, also. For you now have to make your *début* upon the stage of fashionable existence, and it is proper that, hereafter, you should conduct yourself in a manner becoming the heiress of a house like ours."

"But, dear mamma, what has all this to do with cousin Alice?" retorted Julia, wonderingly.

"Alice, my Julia, is a very interesting girl in her peculiar sphere, but she is not *one of us*. In plain terms, she is unfitted, both by birth and education, to associate with such as yourself, and it is henceforth our desire that you should treat her with a coldness indicative of the difference in your respective stations."

Here our friend Pryce, as if he felt it incumbent upon himself to say something, gave utterance to an emphatic, "Ahem!"

Julia remained for some moments with her eyes cast to the floor, in a brown study, while her excellent mother, following up what she conceived to be her first success, continued :

“There are other things, too, my Julia, which I would impress upon your mind, in connection with this subject. It is time, Julia, that you became aware of the fact—if, indeed, you do not already know it—that there is a vast difference between rich and poor people. Moving in such circles as we do, it would hardly seem proper in us to encourage the advances of the commoner sort; and, therefore, when some poor acquaintances, whom you have met at school or elsewhere, endeavor to claim your attention, forget that you have seen them—in fact, my dear, you must not notice them. They are so much *canaille*, and every word exchanged with them is an infringement of our dignity.”

“Ahem !” quoth Pryce, again.

“You will seek in future, my Julia, the society of people at least on a par with us, in appearance and station; and, above all, do not allow yourself to be surpassed in the details of fashion; for how are we to impress people with an idea of our importance, if we do not dress to match?”

To all these arguments, and many more in the same vein, Julia seemed to accord a willing assent, secretly determining, however, to have her own way.

After breakfast concluded, she found an opportunity of bringing Alice to her side, and warning her not to be astonished at any seeming coldness which might be visible thereafter on her part, and giving her also her reasons therefor.

Alice, who was younger by several years than Julia, could not exactly comprehend the necessity for such double dealing; but, nevertheless, she timidly acquiesced in everything advanced by her elegant cousin, thinking that it must all come right in the end.

Julia's honest purpose, however, grew fainter and fainter, as each succeeding day brought fresh inducements in favor of her mother's arguments. Involved in a series of fashionable entertainments—surrounded by that heartless crowd, of which the peculiar circle in which her parents moved was composed, and with flatteries constantly resounding in her ears—what wonder that she soon lost sight of her amiable resolutions? A few brief months, in fact, wrought a tremendous change in the heiress. Poor cousin Alice grew to be totally neglected, and pined her life away in her lone hours, without a friend in whose ear she might pour her innocent complaints.



## CHAPTER IX.

## THE CONTRAST.

A FEW nights after the important occurrence just narrated, Mr. Benedick sat in his well-furnished library—which might have been newly stocked and painted yesterday, it had such an air of freshness and good order about it. A huge Boston rocker supported his sleek, well-fed person, and a great fire blazed and crackled cheerfully before him. The weather had as yet given no sign of abating its rigors, and as he sat thus in his luxurious study, with the major part of his family about him, he could not restrain a feeling of self-gratulation that came over him, as his eye rested for a moment upon those columns of his newspaper in which the sufferings and misdoings of his fellow-mortals were so vividly depicted.

We have said columns, purposely using the plural ; for not only are we daily regaled with such an array of forbidding topics as makes us almost blush for our common humanity, but a large and closely-printed weekly, well supported in our midst, is found to be hardly sufficient to contain the voluminous calendar of our daily transgressions.

“What a set of people there are in the world, to be sure,” said Mr. Benedick, musingly. “Now here are no less than five strikes, two murders, half-a-dozen robberies, and several flagrant

cases of assault and battery, in the same column of to-day's paper, and yet the times were never more prosperous. Money is plenty, the brokers discount freely, with over two millions in gold arriving by the last steamer, yet people complain. Really, these mechanics and laboring men are insatiable!"

Poor laboring men! if you saw your own interests through the right pair of spectacles it's little you need care for the comments of such as Pryce Benedick! When foreign mechanics, living at a distance of thousands of miles from yourselves, are engaged at this moment in manufacturing the innumerable articles of traffic with which your own hands should supply your countrymen, while your own wrongheaded notions open a gate through which the same articles pass to consumers, at rates which forbid the possibility of your competition—the proceeds reverting all the while to the importer, who, in his turn, sends abroad the money that should replenish your own empty pockets—what better can you expect than poverty and want of employment? Let us take heed how we breed among ourselves a pauper community!

"I wonder how you can take an interest in such *canaille*," remarked Mrs. Benedick, looking up from her employment (she was engaged in directing a number of cards of invitation to a forthcoming party). "But you are always bothering your head about the affairs of the poor and needy."

"Now, my dear, you know I don't deserve that," said Pryce, deprecatingly. "If I *am* connected with several charitable associations, it's no more than right that I should be. What an amount of suffering"—and here Pryce looked hurriedly

over his paper. "It's really shocking. Certainly no one can accuse me of forgetting the position I hold in society, but when we think of these poor people, who, after all, are made in the same shape as ourselves, and the privations they endure, and all that—we must be charitable."

Some noise without put an abrupt termination to his homily.

"What's that, Mrs. B.?" he asked, with a look of alarm. He was just in the midst of the murder column, and the least thing was enough to upset his nerves.

"Cats, I think," replied his wife, unconcernedly.

"You know, pa," said Julia, "they are said sometimes to make a noise closely assimilated to that of the human voice."

"The assimilation was very remarkable," replied Mr. Benedick, after listening a moment for a repetition of the noise. "If that wasn't a human voice—"

A low wail of distress, as if from the voice of a child, came distinctly, at this moment, into the room where the trio were seated.

For a few minutes the three sat like statues in the attitudes in which they had been interrupted. The countenances of all grew somewhat pale, and Mr. Benedick quivered like an aspen.

"Don't you think I'd better go see what it is, Mrs. B.?" he said finally.

"Indeed, I don't," replied his amiable helpmate. "I've no notion of being made a widow for the sake of others. You'd better sit still where you are and read your journal."

"I don't know about that," said Pryce, still undecided.

"It's not a very pleasant night out, you know, and it's barely possible that there may be some one in the streets that has no place to go to."

"No place to go to!" repeated Mrs. Benedick. "Why, isn't there the Station Houses, and the Alms House, and I don't know how many other places? and besides, there are the policemen."

Even Mr. Benedick smiled a cadaverous smile as this agreeable fiction occurred to his mind: for he remembered an incident in his own experience on a certain occasion not long past, and he had come to regard the arrangements of the city for the protection of the lives and property of the citizens as a decided humbug, which cost more money to keep its machinery going than the results it accomplished were worth.

The noise which had excited their alarm, however, continuing, Mr. Benedick, who was not destitute of natural feeling, got out of his rocker, it must be confessed with some reluctance, and in spite of the joint remonstrances of his wife and daughter, proceeded to the door. He had no sooner opened it than a tornado of wind roared past him into the hall, extinguishing the gas, and sweeping through the house with a shout of triumph. Mr. Benedick was firm, nevertheless. He advanced boldly out into the portico, where he stood for a few moments with the snow beating down upon his half-blinded eyes, and insinuating itself into his Indian slippers. But it was no go! flesh and blood could not stand it—at least, *his* kind of flesh and blood—and, turning his back upon the enemy, Pryce made a prudent retreat into the castle.

As the door closes upon the merchant's shuffling feet, a slight, fragile figure steals noiselessly from under the projecting steps, and peers intently out into the darkness. At first she observes nothing, but gradually, as her eyes become accustomed to the gloom, she is conscious of something lying upon the steps in the deep snow.

Good God! what is this? can such things occur in a Christian land—within the reach of our hands—at our very doors? Mr. Pryce Benedick was not a brute beast; he had all the springs of our better nature yet welling up undried within him; but luxury had made him indolent. Beneath his very feet, Violet—the child of the sworn friend of his youth—was lying in a swoon, from which, a few minutes later, the skill of man could not have wakened her, but, blind to all but his own comforts, he had shut his ears deliberately upon her feeble cry of distress, and returned to his heavily-stuffed cushions to forget in less time than it has taken to record it the whole occurrence.

But the angels have taken compassion where man would not. Another ear beside Pryce Benedick's has heard the voice, and poor Cousin Alice hastens to contribute out of her scanty store that relief which others had denied. She has carried the fainting figure into a comfortable room devoted to her own uses in the basement of the dwelling, and with her own hands has chafed the life blood into vigor in veins where the current was rapidly ceasing to flow. A little warm food and some comfortable clothing from Alice's wardrobe restores our humble Violet, preserved by God's mercy from the fate which had threatened her, to her former self. Enfolded in the arms

of Alice, she falls into a quiet slumber, such as she has not known since childhood, and when she awakes, in the full glow of the morning, it is to find those loving arms still circled about her waist.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE PHILANTHROPIST AND HIS PROTÉGÉ.

IN the very centre of that classic locality known as Kidd's Court—a small cluster of rickety wooden buildings, on the North River side of the city, and situated almost within a stone's throw of the water—stood the extensive lodging establishment of Mrs. Tabitha Blinker, a near relative of the famous Mrs. Partington, and the relict of a defunct mariner, who, having left his better-half in possession of a few odd dollars—his savings from the profits of an oyster sloop, in which the said Mr. Blinker had owned a share—that amiable lady, not knowing what better she might do with her means, hired, by the advice of some friends, the aforementioned domicile, in Kidd's Court, where she set up what she called a "Model Lodging-House for Men." It was a snug enough sort of a building, what there was of it, consisting of only two stories, with two rooms to a floor—besides a dusty garret, in which was a single dormitory. Any day in the week, Mistress Blinker might be seen through the large, square window in front, alternately attending to the wants of her customers—for she kept a bar—and visiting vengeance on the extremities of her terrified children, of which she had some half-a-dozen, for faults committed within the maternal

hearing. There was not much difference between this and the other edifices in Kidd's Court, the only object of relief being a pump, which stood in the centre of the place, and around which a group of half-dressed women might generally be seen at their tubs. Small signs, hung out at the doors and windows of the houses, denoted the callings of the occupants. Some "took in washing and ironing, and going out to day's work;" another was a boot-maker, and hung out a boot as an emblem of his profession; there were tailors, too, in that romantic and classic region, and it was whispered that a person of suspicious appearance, who was accused of doing up the "items" for one of the city newspapers, occupied a garret in one of the dwellings.

Let us enter the model lodging-house of Mrs. Blinker—a rather difficult operation; for the door is very low, and a barricade of boards and other articles has just been erected by the vigilant mother, for the purpose of keeping her rebellious family within bounds. Ascending a flight of very rickety stairs, without carpeting of any kind, a few minutes' tedious tramping bring us to the door of the little dormitory already alluded to.

This apartment, although so small as to render the act of turning round a difficult exploit, was very snugly arranged, and any one could tell at a glance that it was a bachelor's dwelling. A hammock swung from the ceiling, and the only articles of furniture were a table on three legs, of very ancient appearance; a chest, a plain mahogany desk, several chairs, and a limited set of cooking utensils. A bird-cage



hung on the wall, in which swung a parrot; various curiosities, such as Indian weapons, a cutlass, a gun, and some few shells, served to fill up the vacant space, with a few cheap pictures illustrating nautical subjects.

About ten o'clock on a morning in December this humble apartment was occupied by two persons—the one, a man of not less than fifty years, whose countenance at once bespoke the philanthropist. He was very plainly dressed, as might be supposed from the character of the place in which we find him, but his young companion was attired a little more in keeping with modern fashion. With a bold, free air he united a kind of deferential expression, as though he was quite aware of his own capacities and acquirements, and desirous of not stepping beyond them.

“Mr. Humphreys,” as he called himself, was one of those eccentric beings who float about the world without appearing to have anything in particular to do with it, and are usually denominated “old bachelors.” His principal hobby was to figure as a philanthropist, and being a man of large property, with no near relatives among whom to divide it, he was enabled to foster this predilection to the utmost bent of his humor. He had a whole troop of protégés in various parts of the country, and in different stages of advancement, whom he had taken in every instance literally from the streets, and more than one of whom owed an unsullied name and a prosperous position in life to him.

The other tenant of the apartment was a youth of not more than twenty, who was in fact one of these very protégés. Mr.

Humphreys had picked him up a dirty, ragged boy, in some one of the lowest haunts of the city—the son of depraved and drunken parents, and totally destitute of even the first rudiments of an education.

In spite of the ridicule of his friends, Mr. Humphreys took this unpromising specimen in hand, gave him a good common schooling, and finally placed him in the counting-house of Mr. Benedick—which situation Herbert—as Mr. Humphreys, with his fondness for romantic names, had re-christened him—was filling at the time of his introduction to the reader, and where he attended so well to the duties entrusted to him, that he soon became, as everywhere else indeed, a general favorite. But a few months of experience with mercantile life soon disgusted him. He found men vain, proud, and supercilious, or mean, selfish, and mercenary, and he was afraid that he might one day become like them. Business was the sole engrossing topic. Healthful and harmless recreation for mind and body seemed not to enter into their calculations, and thus it happened that many, if not the majority, of the clerks became fond of dissipating pursuits, and passed their nights in a round of dangerous excitements, which too often proved the cause of their ruin. And so it will undoubtedly continue to be, until our merchants cease to consider the human organization as a mere machine for the manufacture of dollars, and give it some chance of keeping in healthful repair by the means ordained for its sustenance by the Original Inventor.

In the intervals of his business, Herbert had been fond of

perusing narratives relating to the sea, and as this penchant increased he began naturally to feel a little discouraged.

He took the liberty on this occasion of mentioning as much to his protector.

"Heyday," exclaimed Mr. Humphreys, elevating his eyebrows, in assumed displeasure, from the file of papers on which they had been for some time fixed. "What new idea has taken possession of the boy now?"

"It's no new idea, as you are well aware," replied Herbert; "you know I was always fond of a sea-faring life, and never had a taste for being penned up like a sheep in a fold, as I am in old Benedick's offices. Nothing but figures from morning till night, and that pennywise fellow, Crawley, eternally overlooking and scolding me. It's enough to try the patience of a saint!" he added, with a fresh burst of passion.

"Ay, ay! have patience, my lad," said Mr. Humphreys, smiling, "remember, Herbert, my boy, the example of Job."

"Yes—but Job wasn't a clerk, and there were no Mr. Crawleys to worry him, or the good book would not have said so much about his patience." And, as he said this, he walked to the window, and began an inspection of the chimney-pots which abounded in such fanciful varieties in every direction.

"What you say's all very true," said Mr. Humphreys, quietly pursuing his occupation—for he had the peculiarity of writing and talking at the same moment. "I was young once myself, and I know how your hot blood yearns to be doing something; but we can't always act as we want to, in this life, at least, and, therefore, we must do as Provi-

dence orders. Who knows but you, my lad, may one day be as rich as your employer? Persevere: it is the best advice that I can give you."

"But give me a tall-rigged vessel, and a will of my own, and they're welcome to all the money they can make by their trafficking."

He said this in a contemptuous tone, which indicated sufficiently how deeply his feelings were interested in what he said.

"Ay, Herbert, that expression reminds me of myself when I was a lad like you, but experience has taught me policy. I can only recommend you, as I would any young acquaintance, not to throw aside your mainstay, and you'll be all the better for it in after years."

"That's the way of the world, sir, but it isn't my way; I thought you had more heart than to preach up such cold calculating lessons to one whom you have professed to love as your own son."

A tear stood in his dark eyes as he said this, which called forth a corresponding emotion in those of the old gentleman.

"Well, well," he said, "perhaps I am wrong; but time will show. Only don't neglect my advice without due consideration. It is all I ask, and believe me, you'll find your account in it hereafter. Besides, Herbert, you must not forget that you have a sacred duty to perform, and for that you should still be willing to work and to suffer. God did not place any of us here that life might be to us a paradise. If that were the case, we need only immortality to render

this earth a Heaven. No: we must bear our burthens cheerfully and steadily, like men as we are, and so conduct ourselves that we may die without any dread of the hereafter."

"You are right, sir—always right. I am too impetuous, I grant, but even that may be conquered if I set about it. I will go back to the counting-house; I will even strive to please the proud Mr. Benedick for your sake; but don't ask me to like Crawley, that's all."

"That's all well spoken, except the last," said Mr. Humphreys. "We must tutor ourselves not to dislike any one, and half our troubles in this world will be lightened. But it's time you were off, boy. So at once cheerfully to your business. This evening you may come to me as usual, and we will see what can be further done to render your place agreeable."

Herbert left Kidd's Court, just growing savory with an unaccountable smell of red herrings and smoked codfish, with a lighter heart, and was soon in sight of one of those extensive stores which are now the pride and boast of the lower part of the city. Entering, at once, this awe-inspiring place, he was met at the door of the office by a tall, gaunt individual, with hair like the bristles of a pig, and a sharp, acid countenance, not very inviting to "outsiders"—as the clerks were wont among themselves jocularly to describe it.

The moment Herbert's eyes alighted upon this ill-omened visage, he was satisfied, in his own mind, that he was in for it, and he accordingly compressed his lips, and did his best to

resist the inclination which prompted him to kick Crawley, bristles and all, into the street.

"Good morning, sir," he said, with a mock deferential bow; he could have smote himself afterwards for making it. "Fine day for business."

"Morning, sir, morning!" exclaimed Mr. Crawley, in well counterfeited amazement, and pulling a gold repeater from his fob, as he spoke. "Sir, are you aware that it is near nine o'clock, sir; nine o'clock—the golden hours of the day wasted and gone. Young man, this will never do; you must be more punctual."

The youth's independent spirit prompted him to turn about and give Mr. Crawley, the store and all a farewell benediction, but remembering Mr. Humphreys and his parting injunction, he merely muttered, "I shall take care another time, sir," and passed into the office.

## CHAPTER XI.

## A SOIRÉE AMONG THE UPPER TEN.

THE "grand re-union," as Mrs. Benedick was pleased to term her party, at length came off. Great preparations had evidently been made by the Benedicks to impress their visitors with an idea of their wealth and magnificence. Everything that meets the eye on this festive occasion—the eighteenth birthnight of the fair daughter of the mansion—is of the most costly and superb description. Chairs, tables, ottomans, etc., are resplendent with gilding, and ornaments of all kinds depend from the walls and ceilings amid the rich crimson drapery. The principal staircase is decorated with flowers, and statuary interspersed among them at judicious intervals, while at each platform stand a couple of shiny-faced negroes, with white jackets and aprons, and the blackest of all possible countenances, to attend to the comforts of the guests, and to pass the names of the various arrivals, as, after a visit to the reception rooms, they prepare to ascend. Through the kind offices of these grinning Cerberuses, Mr. Tompson makes his entrée into the crowded drawing-room as Mr. Jones, and an unfortunate student of medicine, properly named Sillymore, is ushered into the presence of several hundred fellow beings, as Mr. Killimore.

On the present occasion, the spacious apartments of the Benedicks were filled to repletion by as gay an assemblage as ever congregated beneath a rich man's roof, under the name of "fashionable society." There were bankers, with all the importance of their calling staring out in every lineament of their florid countenances; millionaires gathered in small select knots among themselves, and not condescending to mingle with the general crowd, as if fearful of being contaminated by some one less wealthy than they; merchants well-to-do, but not exactly wealthy, who look at said millionaires with awe, and tell capital jokes among themselves of Rothschild, and individuals of his calibre.

Prominent among all these are numerous young men, so singularly apparelled, that you are at a loss to make up your mind whether they are dressed for some burlesque part in a contemplated *tableau vivant*, or from serious choice, and with a view of rendering themselves admired by the multitude. Some of these individuals wear immense cravats of all sorts of hues, and vests of fanciful figures and patterns—some looking like great animated chequer-boards, others like the covers of illuminated "Wandering Jews" and "Pictorial Family Bibles," though the greater number of them exhibit plain, white facings, which give them an undeniably womanish appearance. Some have delicate moustaches, very like unto cockroaches, in size and hue, and bury themselves to the ears in collars that, if the wearer should be so unfortunate as to get a fall, must inevitably cut his throat, or at least deprive him of an ear. Sometimes, these juveniles promenade arm in



arm, or go about retailing insipidities among equally insipid female friends; at others, they parade the room, with delicate and pretty girls, embowered in ringlets, and rich in bare backs and shoulders, hanging upon their arms, and having rather the air of men displaying to the world their triumphs. Then there are several juniors, of from twelve to eighteen, with standing collars, skirt-coats, and cravats, who stare at the larger women through eye-glasses, and look languishingly whenever they catch the eyes of their fairer neighbors, who whisper and wonder among themselves, "whose boys are those?" Most of the talking, in fact, is effected by these clever boys, assisted by the misses—while age, and wit, and talent (if by accident some may have found itself mixed up in such unaccustomed company), go to the wall.

Herbert having surveyed this scene in company with Crawley—who, finding that there is a chance of rising through Herbert's popularity in the store, has lately made him a friend, which he proves by obtaining him an invitation to the "jam" of his employer—and conceived for everything he sees an infinite disgust, begins to think of retiring, but Crawley insists upon his remaining, as the "fun" has not yet commenced.

Mr. Crawley was attired with extreme care in a suit of black cloth, with a white satin vest, and his shirt cuffs neatly rolled back over his sleeves. Still, however, he had that counting-house air about him, which was so disgusting to Herbert, and which Mr. Crawley himself, although dressed in

the robes of Alexander the Great, could not have shaken from him.

In the glances that passed between them, Mr. Crawley also observed that his companion was extremely well attired, and made an exceedingly genteel appearance in his new toggery, and he, of a sudden, began to grow communicative, and conveyed to him much information respecting the Benedick family, in such a manner that, before they had got half way to their place of destination, Herbert's dread of Mr. Crawley began to wear off, and he even found that he could sustain a conversation with him tolerably decently.

A sudden hush comes over the crowded apartments; the whispering, murmuring, wheezing, shuffling of fans, etc., is in a moment stilled, as Julia, attended by her ever vigilant "mamma" and several intimate female friends, glides gracefully, and with a sort of lofty courtesy, into the room.

Every object was now abandoned for the feature of the evening, and introductions followed each other in rapid succession. It was in the midst of this confusion that Herbert, under close convoy of Crawley—whose name the usher has very appropriately tortured into *Smauley*—entered the drawing-rooms, now crowded almost to suffocation.

"Who is that tall, disdainful beauty in orange satin?" asked Herbert, as for the first time his eyes alighted upon Julia Benedick.

"That," replied Crawley, "is your employer's favorite daughter, and that fine young man you see so much about

her is his son. Both very distinguished young persons—Miss Benedick, especially; you may look at her, but you will not be allowed to address her.”

Herbert looked at Crawley with a puzzled expression, as if he didn't exactly comprehend him; and, regarding Miss Benedick more attentively, he saw in her a beautiful girl, whose charms, however, were wholly concealed by over-dressing, and in whose air and manner there was something so repulsive and haughty, that the imprudent youth immediately forgot all about her, and transferred his attention to other parts of the room—Mr. Crawley kindly consenting to be his companion in the difficult survey. At this moment, the music struck up, and the promenade commenced—the modest and diffident sitting still, with their backs against the walls of the rooms like so many specimens pinned up against the back of a naturalist's show-case. Herbert's wish being chiefly to observe, he drew aside with Mr. Crawley, who kept continually bowing and smiling to imaginable friends, with the view of impressing his charge with an idea of his importance, into an adjacent corner, and certainly Herbert's idea of the company in which he found himself was anything but complimentary to the individuals, male and female, who came under his inspection. Meanwhile, Mr. Crawley gave him the pedigree and probable wealth of every important personage in succession, as he passed, interspersed with pleasant little bits of scandal, regarding such and such a person; but the youth soon turned a deaf ear to Mr. Crawley, for he found his

attention suddenly rivetted by a young girl of more than ordinary attractions, who sat alone in an opposite niche, half-hidden from sight by the drapery, and with an expression of unhappiness in her features that looked as if she wanted but little provocation to make her dissolve in tears.

"If I am not too bold, sir," said Herbert, "and as you seem to be acquainted with almost every one present, might I ask who that young lady is that sits by herself in yonder dark corner?"

Crawley glanced in the direction indicated by Herbert, and a frown shaded for an instant his placid features.

"She's nobody," he answered; "a poor dependent of the family. You see they take no notice of her."

But Herbert, from the interest which he manifested in her, by the constancy with which his eyes reverted to that quarter of the room, evidently considered her somebody. He saw, at a glance, that she was neglected merely on account of her poverty, and his sympathies were immediately enlisted in her behalf. Refreshments being announced, during the rush which followed, he managed to slip away from Crawley, and, filling a plate with such trifles as he thought might prove acceptable in this case, he hurried over to the distant corner where Alice was still sitting.

In the meantime, Crawley was hooked by a maiden lady, with a forest of false curls, and a profusion of bare back and shoulders, who would be answered upon certain points relative to the family, and this secured Herbert a long and delight

ful *tête-à-tête* with Alice; who, finding one being in the world to sympathize with her, forgot for the moment where she was and what she was thus boldly doing.

The company in the neighborhood of Julia was decidedly the most lively, and a rattling fire of witty sayings was kept up by Cousin Mynns—a tall young man, with slight moustache, and altogether exceedingly gawky in appearance—and Major Dabster, U. S. A., a ferocious looking individual in military undress, who was continually boring the company with stupid anecdotes of the late campaign in Mexico—though no one, however friendly to the major, could, with any degree of certainty, aver that he had ever been in action, or performed half the valorous deeds for which he gave himself such frequent credit.

There was also Mr. Pinkerton Podge, who dressed very tastefully—that is, fashionably—and who appeared on the best of terms with everybody present, from the fact of its being rumored that he would, in all human probability, soon come into possession of an enormous estate, which had been for years accumulating in the Podge family.

Just as Major Dabster had entered into another of his long campaign stories, the master of ceremonies was happily announced; and, in the general scattering which followed, Crawley sought for Herbert in vain; nor was it until some half-hour had elapsed that Mr. Benedick observed the alarming gulf into which Alice had fallen, and, pointing to them, asked of Crawley, with a look of fire, what that meant? Then it was that Crawley, out of whom all the starch had

been taken by his superior's manners, rushed up to Herbert, and, seizing him by the sleeve, dragged him urgently from the place.

"So, here's a pretty how-d'ye-do!" he gasped, in a sudden fit of rage, when they found themselves alone in the deserted reception-room, arranging their dresses preparatory to departure; "the pleasures of an evening cut short by your juvenile imprudences! How dare you, sir?" and he turned a look of fury on his young companion.

"Dare!" retorted Herbert, whose hot blood was up in a moment; "come, I like that! Pray, who and what are you, that you address me in such terms, and in such a manner?"

Mr. Crawley leaned against the papering, fairly staggered by the young man's audacity.

"Well, this beats anything I remember ever to have encountered," he exclaimed, in unfeigned wonder; "a strippling like that to use such language; here's a to-do, indeed! Young man, you'll sweat for this to-morrow. Come along," and leading the way, they both emerged into the street.

The cab was standing there yet, but Herbert was too indignant to think of returning home in company with Mr. Crawley. He, therefore, made out to mutter, "I wish you a very good night, sir!" and hastily took his way, alone and on foot, in the direction of Kidd's Court—to him, with all its poverty, a far more agreeable place of sojourn, than the rich man's domicile, with all its splendor.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE MORNING AFTER THE REVEL.

IF everything seemed bright and attractive on the night of the entertainment at Mr. Benedick's, the altered appearance of things on the morning after that memorable occasion offered a contrast which would have slightly astonished the inexperienced youth, to whom it had offered so novel an introduction to city life.

Mrs. Benedick was seated in the front drawing-room, dressed for the reception of visitors, precisely as though she had not been attending to her guests at four o'clock on that morning. Julia was seated at her embroidery frame, knitting an anti-Macassar, while Helen was pounding vigorously away at a grand piano, to anything but the delight of a sleepy neighborhood.

Two or three white, pink-eyed poodles, tricked out in parti-colored ribbons, on the arrangement of which Mrs. Benedick had bestowed more attention than she would have condescended to lavish on many a human being less fortunate in his circumstances than the poodles, were lolling about on the chairs and sofas.

The countenances of each of the ladies gave indications of the preceding night's dissipation, being exceedingly pale, and

the eyes red and inflamed for want of rest. The interest was enhanced by a certain air of ill-humor which rested like a cloud upon the features of all.

"I declare, Helen, you are incurable!" exclaimed the mother, laying down the book she had been reading, and glancing angrily at the piano. "It is utterly impossible for me to understand what I am reading, with such a horrid din continually resounding in my ears. Do, pray, close your instrument and try something else."

"Why, ma chere maman," replied the dutiful child, in that affected mixture of English and French which in exclusive circles is considered so genteel; "how can you call it a din? *Monsieur Têtedeveau*, my tutor, declares that I play charmingly, and I'm sure he ought to be a judge!"

"Tettyvous fiddlesticks!" replied maman, testily. "I wonder, child, how you came to fancy that man for a teacher. I'm sure, *I* cant!"

"Not fancy him? Not fancy Têtedeveau? Oh! *maman*, I'm sure you don't speak as you think. Besides having such a beautiful moustache and luxuriant head of hair, (Têtedeveau's head was like a mop), he is one of the most distinguished of the foreign refugees, and his conversation is so remarkably interesting, that I could listen to him for hours. They say, too, that he is connected with one of the oldest families; and when the Bourbons again come into power, which our paper says they're going to do immediately, he's sure to be a great character. I shouldn't wonder if they made him prime minister, with such talents."



(Têtedeveau ought to have been made High Treasurer, for his charges were of such a nature as to show that he had a decided genius for finance.)

"Whatever may be Mr. Tettyvou's opinion, I wish that you would cease playing."

"Impossible, maman. I am practising."

"Then do, for goodness' sake, play something besides that horrid polka! It quite makes my head ache."

"You talk very strangely, maman. I dare say if Julia played it you'd be well enough pleased," she added, with a look of spite and jealousy at her sister—at whom she felt naturally indignant for claiming all the attention of the men.

"Mother is right," for the first time put in Julia, returning the look with interest—for she was daily in fear that her sister's attractions might lessen the circle of her own admirers. "It is distressing to hear that eternal polka incessantly dining in one's ears, when one is interested in a book. You see I prefer more peaceful employments."

"And well you may," rejoined Helen, "for, mercy knows, you made noise enough in *your* singing days to drown the noise of fifty pianos, even if they were all played by Meyer instead of your sister."

"Helen, you are getting insolent."

"Not more insolent than yourself, miss!"

"It's a falsehood, ma'am! I never was more conciliating!"

"The falsehood is all on your own side."

"I say it is not!"

"I say it is!"

"You tell a fib, miss!"

"I—*what!*" almost screams Helen, bouncing up and apostrophising her exclamation with one tremendous bang upon the piano.

"You tell a fib, I repeat!"

"Then take that, and that, and that, Miss!" cries the injured Helen, darting towards her sister, upon whose cheeks she succeeded in delivering a single slap with those dainty fingers which were so much praised by her admirers—when the mother, throwing down her novel, rushed forward with a shriek, and burying *her* fingers in the long and streaming tresses of her youngest born, pulled her forcibly backward.

As if all this racket was not sufficient, the poodles rushed frantically from their various retreats, and commenced a vigorous assault upon the heels of the combatants. At this moment the door of the apartment in which this interesting domestic scene was taking place was rather abruptly opened, disclosing to view the portly figure of Mr. Benedick, and the bewhiskered lineaments of a tall foreigner, who seemed suddenly rivetted to the floor by the unusual sight.

But if the anger of the father and the confusion of the visitor were great, the dismay which seized the ladies on being thus detected in the little disagreeabilities of domestic life was far greater.

At the moment the door flew open, they formed among themselves a *tableau vivant*, which in point of spirit and effect far surpassed anything that had ever been gotten up in those elegant drawing-rooms for the delectation of their friends.

Mrs. Benedick standing in the attitude she had just assumed, retained her grasp of Helen's hair, while casting a backward glance at the intruders. Helen, thus entangled, and bending backward in the shape of a crescent (for her mother, to use a nautical phrase, had "hauled taut"), with her hands tossed wildly in the air, had opened her rosy mouth for one loud, prolonged blast from woman's most effective organ—while Julia, with two of the poodles which she had caught up in her arms, stood on the defensive. One remaining poodle, partaking of the general feeling of shame, shrunk meanly under one of the sofas.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## HERBERT LOSES HIS PLACE.

FOR many days after the occurrence just narrated, Herbert's position at the counting-room was a very unpleasant one. Mr. Crawley's disposition had a far greater infusion of the lemon in it than usual, and the boy occasionally observed Mr. Benedick gazing upon him abstractedly, and with a lowering countenance, waking up suddenly as it were, and walking away whenever he found himself caught in the act. Conscious that he had done nothing to merit reproach, however, Herbert did not relax his usual cheerfulness, but applied himself to his duties as vigorously as ever, satisfied that he earned every penny that he received in compensation for his labors. Crawley disliked him, it was evident; and, as he was the paymaster of the concern, he always took care that Herbert should be the last one to receive his salary, and embraced every little opportunity of annoying the poor boy that might present itself.

But Herbert bore all uncomplainingly, even tolerating Mr. Crawley's ill-humor, and every leisure moment was devoted to the cultivation of those intellectual tastes which seem to be inherent in almost every nature, and which modern society alone seems bent upon eradicating. And as he increased in

intelligence his dislike of Pryce Benedick increased in proportion, until he had almost resolved, were it only for a change, to cut his detestable clerkship, and follow the sea.

And Alice! did she ever pause to think of him—the youthful stranger, whose musical voice had poured into her gentle ears almost the only words of kindness she had ever known?

Many a time and oft did Herbert ask himself this question, but to no purpose. Mr. Humphreys, of course, he had made, as in duty bound, the confidant of all his secrets, and the old man had compelled him to repeat the account of the ball, with his impressions of what he saw and heard, and particularly the scene that had transpired between himself and Crawley, until it had grown to be a stale subject with Herbert. Whenever Herbert spoke of Alice, however, the old man shook his hand disapprovingly, and advised him to give it up, as a bad bargain, which would be likely to entail a world of trouble upon both of them.

"It's of no use, sir," he would answer, in reply to these remonstrances, "I must think of her, and I will think of her, for I can't help it; and as for that fellow, Crawley, for ten words of his impudence, I'll deprive him of that eternal sneer that he's got, by spoiling a few of those teeth that he so prides himself upon."

He spoke again of abandoning his present pursuit, but his more aged adviser was strong against it. He set before him the probable consequences of such a step, and finally so urgently implored him to remain with Benedick, that Herbert could not help attributing this earnestness to some motive

other than his own welfare. Before long, however, a circumstance transpired that decided the question without his own interference.

Hitherto Herbert had been a mere nonentity in the counting-room ; but, as the clerks began, by degrees, to be aware of the fact that he had attracted the notice of Mr. Benedick himself, and that he had several times succeeded in getting the better of Crawley, whom they all detested equally with him, and whose presence they endured as a patient does a dose of quinine, taken daily, they began to think seriously of admitting him into their confidence—of making him one of the honorable body of which they formed a part. Accordingly, after a brief conference, held during the temporary absence of some of the heads of the establishment, it was resolved, unanimously, that he should be apprised of the honor intended him ; and one of their members, Ferris by name, was deputed to place himself in communication with the young gentleman as speedily as possible.

Mr. Ferris was an individual whose style of dress and general manner of conducting himself indicated that, in his own opinion, at least, he was a personage of no little consequence. He was short and very slender, and wore a habit sufficiently large to clothe a person of double his size. He had a taste for colors, too ; and acting upon this principle, his pantaloons were of light blue cloth, his vest nankeen, his coat a bottle green, his cravat of as many hues as you can conveniently group together at one time in your imagination ; added to this, his complexion was extremely ruddy and rubicund, and

his head was surmounted by a crop of hair quite as yellow as that which figures in stage wigs, under the title of "low comedy." In fact, the whole demeanor and appearance of Mr. Ferris were so irresistibly comic, that, placed on the stage, "accoutred as he was," that individual could not have failed to create an excitement.

Herbert was on the point of leaving the counting-room one evening, when this personage, who had purposely remained behind the rest, tapped him gently on the shoulder.

"Ferris! you here still? been having a confidential talk with Crawley, eh?" exclaimed Herbert, lightly, not supposing that any one about the great establishment thought him worthy of being spoken to on his own account.

"No, not exactly that," replied Mr. Ferris, "but, I say, Herbert, you and old Crawley don't seem to agree very well together, do you?"

"Maybe we do and maybe we don't," he replied, having, at first, a shrewd idea that his companion was "pumping him."

"Come, now, don't be off-ish," said Mr. Ferris, who saw that his motives were suspected, and really felt hurt at the insinuation. "We're fellow clerks, you know, and betwixt me and you, I hate old Crawley as I do the devil—that is, comparatively speaking," he added, in his turn looking suspiciously at Herbert.

"Well, that's some consolation," returned Herbert, "but see here, Ferris, there's something strange, I must confess, in all this. I know that I've been the butt of the whole office, ever since I came into the establishment, and you'll excuse me if I ask

your motive in addressing me, before I honor you with my confidence."

"You may rely upon me," returned Ferris, with his hand upon the left breast of his coat.

"Well—heave ahead!" rejoined Herbert, carelessly.

"Don't talk of heaving, I beg of you," returned Ferris, putting his hand on his fellow-clerk's arm, and making a very long face as he spoke; "that abominable word always puts me in mind of the time when I was sent out as supercargo in the Sally Ann, and the reminiscences connected therewith are by no means agreeable, I assure you, on the word of a gentleman."

"This is a precious lubber, at any rate," thought Herbert: adding aloud—"You don't like the sea, then? I beg your pardon. Pray, go on."

"That's more like it," said Mr. Ferris, with a brighter look than before. "And, as you're so candid about your affairs, I may as well tell you at once why I spoke to you. You see, there's a good many of us clerks attached to the house—"

"Of course; I am aware of that," replied Herbert.

"And the last comer, being the junior—you understand."

"Perfectly; nothing can be more clear."

"Is not immediately admitted upon terms of equality with those who came before him. Am I plain?"

"You mean, in short, that the last comer is generally considered a fit subject for the jokes and jibes of the office. Well, proceed."

"You should not take it quite so seriously," remonstrated



his brother clerk; "the fact is, and why mince the matter, my chums have witnessed with pleasure the spirit you have manifested in your frequent bickerings with that old turtle, Crawley—I speak comparatively, mind—and having come to the conclusion that you are a regular trump, and there's good stuff in you, they—that is, we—have resolved to make you one of us!"

"No!" exclaimed Herbert, with assumed earnestness.

"Yes, it's a fact; but that's not all; you see—pardon my plainness, but you are evidently green as a pea, in matters appertaining to the shop, and don't therefore comprehend me, perhaps, quite as clearly as if you had been an old hand at the bellows—you see there's a good deal of indignation prevailing among us just now as a body, at the unjust and overbearing conduct of our employers"—Herbert pricked up his ears—"and, in fact, betwixt me and you, we're determined—that is, the clerks of New York generally—have determined to call a meeting, for the purpose of letting our employers know what we think of 'em? Now, do you like the idea, eh?"

The idea of letting their employers know what they thought of them? It suited Herbert exactly.

"Capital!" he said; and his countenance left no doubt that he entered fully into the meaning of the thing.

"I'm glad to see there's so much spirit in them."

"Then you will join the movement?" said Ferris, much pleased.

"To be sure, I will, heart and soul. But, what's the prime object?—there's an object, isn't there?" asked Herbert.

"Of course—six o'clock for shutting up, or no clerks," responded Mr. Ferris, firmly.

"And when do you meet?"

"To-night, at eight. Will you come?"

"I'll consult my friends," replied Herbert, thoughtfully, "and if I see no reason to change my mind, upon mature reflection, I'll be with you."

"Do, by all means, and I'll call for you in the evening."

"If you please, I'd rather you wouldn't," said Herbert, coloring at the thought of the meanness of his lodgings; "appoint some place not far out of the way, and I'll meet you at any hour you may designate."

Mr. Ferris did appoint a place of rendezvous, a well-known hotel in the vicinity of the Mercantile Library—the conductors of which famous institution were luckily ignorant of the plot that was hatching, or that temple of learning might have been shaken to its foundations—and then the fellow-clerks shook hands, and separated.

At half-past seven, Herbert repaired to Lovejoy's, where he found Mr. Ferris, anxiously awaiting his arrival. Taking his fellow-clerk's arm, he proceeded with him to a neighboring tavern, ascending to the second floor of which, they shortly found themselves entering a spacious room, the objects in which were at first invisible, from the enormous quantities of cigar smoke that filled it. And looking more closely, Herbert found himself in the centre of a crowd of young men, all attired in what appeared to be the very extreme of fashion, and each having in his mouth a lighted cigar.

Indeed, judging from the elegance of their costume, and the profusion of breastpins, watch-chains, rings, seals, et cetera, one would have supposed himself to have stepped in upon a meeting of wealthy employers, instead of an indiscriminate array of indignant clerks.

Ten o'clock had arrived before any particular movement was made. By that time, he who had been elected as president of the meeting thought fit to place himself at the head of a long baize-covered table, loaned for the occasion, and to call the meeting to "order." At this command, the confusion was redoubled; and the rapping of the president's knuckles upon the table, appeared to add to, rather than diminish, the prevailing disorder. At last, however, comparative silence was obtained, a set of officers was with difficulty organised, and the minutes of some previous meeting were read to almost unheeding ears. Several speeches were then made, which afforded Herbert some amusement, and Mr. Ferris grew, at length, to be so excited upon the subject, that he mounted, first a chair, and then the table itself, and gave the assemblage a speech, which they, in blessed innocence of what he was saying, applauded vociferously. How long Mr. Ferris might have continued, it is difficult to say; for he had at last come to a pause, and was considering what next to utter, when a voice in the crowd suggested to him to "heave ahead, there,"—words which, though comparatively unmeaning, had such an effect upon Mr. Ferris that he precipitately descended from his elevated position, and was seen no more, as an orator, that night.

The "speeches" having been got through with, it was suggested that the "refreshments" should be introduced; and at the word, several mysterious-looking men, with cadaverous countenances, and seedy clothes, who had been seated, during the evening, near the president, busily engaged in writing, scrambled together an incongruous collection of bits of paper, and hurried away, like the witches in "Macbeth," calling up in the beholder's mind involuntarily the expression of the great thane of Fife: "the air hath bubbles as the water hath, and these are of them!"

Then what a scene commenced. Business being set aside for the night, the multitude fell to work at demolishing rare-bits and cold cuts; and bowl after bowl of hot punch was brought in, and "put away" with a celerity which proved that they were not unfamiliar with such delicacies. Herbert would have departed, but his new friends were so jolly, and Mr. Ferris was so pressing in his attentions, that it was midnight before he got away, and when he left the crowded and noisy room, he felt that he had gone beyond his bounds, and that indulging, as he had, in place of "attending to business," he had made himself an actor in one of the most ridiculous farces that had ever been perpetrated within his limited knowledge.

The clerks' meeting had its effect, though; flaming reports of the proceedings appeared the next day in the papers, accompanied by warm editorials upon the subject, urging that clerks had need of some little respite for the improvement of their minds. Most of the community succumbed to the

arrangement, and great was the delectation of the clerks of New York city thereupon. By way of improving their minds, they resorted in swarms, each night, to the theatre, and places of like amusement, and, in the course of a few months, the keepers of several well-known restaurants retired upon the strength of the sudden addition to their business.

The result of this meeting, however, was disastrous to at least two of the participators in it. The morning after the revel, as Herbert lay in his little cot, with a racking pain at his head, the consequence of the preceding night's debauch, he received a polite note, in the hand-writing of Mr. Crawley, stating that his services were no longer needed by "the house;" and Mr. Ferris, after being severely taken to task, as the author of the glowing speech which appeared in the "Investigator" of that morning, and most of which, by the way, originated with the reporters themselves, was ordered to quit the premises, which he did, dissolved in a flood of briny tears.

The "six o'clock movement" having resulted in obtaining, for those at least who were concerned in that memorable affair, not only the number of hours (for mental and moral improvement, etc., etc.,) desired by its originators, but even more than they deemed necessary to the purpose, Herbert found himself at leisure to form new plans for the future, and it was not long before he had made choice of the Law, as a means wherewith to earn his daily bread—the Law being, as he imagined, about the only profession that was yet left

open to beginners. Fortunately for his peace of mind, Herbert had not, thus far, the remotest knowledge of that interesting tribe of young gentlemen who daily repair to what they call their "chambers" (usually little dens about the size of an ordinary clothes-press, munificently furnished forth with two chairs and a desk), to lie in wait for that client who is so remarkably backward in coming forward, or even his dauntless spirit would have shrunk at the contemplation of the troubles that were to beset his path in the carrying out of his ambitious intentions.

Mr. Humphreys jocosely asked his young protégé if he had not better try the medical line, as students of that ilk were so scarce; but seeing that Herbert had resolved upon making the essay, the good old gentleman opposed him no longer.

"Luckily," he said, "I have done something in that way myself, so your first steps, if you should happen to be discouraged, need not cost you much besides the lost time."

Mr. Humphreys soon found an opportunity of entering Herbert as a reader and copyist at the office of a legal acquaintance, who promised to forward the lad's views as far as might be in his power. In order that Herbert might not suffer from the want of exercise and fresh air—two things so essential to and yet so rarely enjoyed by the student—Mr. Humphreys, now that the summer heats were drawing near, had a neat little villa of his own, to which he sometimes retired from the noise of the town, fitted up anew for their accommodation, and here he resolved that the young student

should make his home, until the return of winter should render necessary another change of quarters.

There was something in all this peculiarly pleasing to Herbert, and in order to testify his gratitude to Mr. Humphreys, he entered upon his legal studies with more than his usual diligence ; so that, before two weeks had elapsed, he had read Blackstone through from beginning to end, and, knowing of course by that time nothing about it, had to begin again—more slowly.

“Never mind, my boy,” Mr. Humphreys would say; “you’ll have to repeat that prescription a great many times more, and some more nauseous doses, I can tell you, before you write your first brief.”

Herbert gave little heed to these well-meant admonitions—what youth of his age ever did?—and the usual preliminaries were at his desire immediately entered into.

During the brief interval which had elapsed, however, since the birth-night party, a new subject had treacherously urged itself upon Herbert’s attention. This was his interview with the fair Alice, whose position and prospects at the Benedicks were so nearly akin to his own that, in spite of himself, the interest implanted in his breast on that occasion kept quietly gaining ground, until he at last found it no easy matter to keep her out of his thoughts during the hours of study.

He soon found that it would be imperative on him to do this, and while he was making his mind up to act the “hero,” or the “martyr”—which ever character his destiny might insist

upon thrusting on him (how immensely important are these seemingly trivial affairs to the young and romantic; that is to all of us before prudence and policy enter into our calculations to put an effectual extinguisher upon the genuine emotions of the heart!) fate was quietly shaping his lot to suit her own purposes.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## LIFE AMONG THE "UNDER-CURRENT."

FAR out upon one of the least frequented of the avenues, in the midst of one of those dreary and vacant wastes which abound in the suburbs of all growing cities, stood, at the time of these occurrences, an old, dilapidated dwelling, long ago abandoned by its owners to the rats and mice, which were generally supposed to be its only occupants. It formed part and parcel of the property of Mr. Pryce Benedick; but, as it lay in a district not often visited by human footsteps, and as Pryce had no immediate use for the land upon which it stood, choosing rather to hold it for a rise in real estate, it had been suffered to rot and decay there by degrees—a very different object from what it had been in the days of the former proprietor; when it was the happy and comfortable dwelling of a numerous family, surrounded on all sides by abundant cornfields and fruit-teeming orchards, with no idea that the whistle of a locomotive would ever disturb the calm repose that brooded o'er it.

To the casual passer-by, the old building had the appearance of being untenanted; for no glass defiled the sashless and gaping windows of the decayed rookery, and the north-easterly winds made sad moans through the half-rotted

clapboards. But, go below, and a very different picture was presented. The room to which we introduce the reader, had been originally used as a kitchen—a fact that was sufficiently evident, from the immense chimney-place which occupied almost one entire side of the apartment, and also from the circumstance of its being paved with brick. Great, yawning cracks intersected the plastering of the walls, humid with the exhalations of the vault. Overhead, there was nothing to conceal from sight the beams and rafters of the adjoining floor, and every precaution had been used to conceal the fact of the building being occupied.

On the present occasion, a meagre fire was smoking upon the extensive hearthstone, the vapors of which—the chimney having been, for obvious reasons, choked up so as to be useless—were floating at random about the room, or vault; and, on heaps of straw, and discolored rags of every hue which lay scattered around, several wretched and emaciated beings, seemingly in the last stage of some foul disease, but in reality in the best of preservation, were outstretched. A rough table occupied the centre of this den, at which were seated several women, and a man whose whole appearance shows that he is a character, and renders him well worthy a brief description.

The latter is comfortably clad, although every one around is in rags. But the great feature in his attire is the combination of colors which it presents. No two articles of his apparel are alike, although red is the predominating color in each. Even his hair is red. His neckerchief is red, also, and contains sufficient stuff for a tolerably sized shawl. Shirt collars

he disdains as an unnecessary and womanish luxury; and, over all, he wears a light, blue overcoat, of some shaggy and coarse material. Add to all this a white hat of tolerably ancient appearance, surrounded by a narrow band of tarnished crape; a pair of high and very ragged boots, drawn over the trowsers; a couple of small, luminous eyes; and a large, expressive mouth, surrounded by a perfect forest of beard, of the same color as the hair, and the inventory is complete.

It is some credit for us to say that this rascal, although well-known as a public character in this section of the country, is not a plant of indigenous growth—having some years since disappeared suddenly from the neighborhood of Bow Bells, where he first vegetated, owing to the frequency with which his name had been kept before the public in his native land. Of his career on this side the water it is only necessary to say, that his manner of living had not done discredit to his bringing up. Half the villainies perpetrated in the community might, with safety, be laid at his door, and no vagabond within the city possessed so much power to do evil, or so much influence with the police, as FLINT: for fortune had played him, too, a slippery trick. Detected as a fence, and a receiver of stolen goods, the fellow, after serving a brief time at the "island," had been released, to consort once more with those whose misdeeds he had before made a livelihood by screening.

A short pipe was firmly clasped between this gentleman's teeth at the moment of his introduction to the reader, and a stick, which would answer the purpose of a cane or cudgel, as

occasion might dictate, lay peaceably before him upon the table. Two of the women that surrounded him were young and pretty, notwithstanding that the miserable garments in which they were clad deprived their looks of every vestige of the human being; the rest were ugly and old, or lame, and, by their ceaseless chattering, managed to keep up between them a constant confusion. Over the fire sat an old crone, clad like the rest, whose withered and bony hands clutched a staff, which she was obliged to cling to for support; and a few locks of silvery hair creeping from the tattered cap she wore, and flowing unconfined down her back, gave her, in conjunction with her wild attire, a witch-like and supernatural appearance.

"Hush, ye fools!" exclaimed this ancient anatomy, as the uproar increased, so as to rival in volume the roaring of the blast without—"can't one whom ye should all honor and respect enjoy a little respite from her troubles, undisturbed by your infernal orgies? If ye must make merry, go out into the orchard, yonder, and you'll find fit companions for your revels, in the fiends that are howling above our heads while I'm speaking."

"Really, mother, you are too strong in your expressions," retorted the sensitive Mr. Flint, in behalf of his companions. "You deal in such unpleasant figures, that one dreams of nothing but apple trees turning into hobgoblins, and shovels and tongs dancing of hornpipes, by his bedside o' nights! It'll all end in your ruinin' our nerves, whereby we shall become unfit for our profession, and then what'll we do?—we shall

be obliged to turn honest, and disgrace our cloth, in spite of ourselves. There's a picture for you."

The lachrymose, half-serious tone in which Mr. Flint delivered this piece of wit, occasioned such a roar of laughter, that it half awoke the sleepers, lying miscellaneously around, and a volley of oaths and imprecations followed. The old crone partially aroused herself from her reverie over the fire, and growled out something about some people wanting rest as well as others, and who knew what Mr. Sawyer, himself, might one day come to; and then relapsed into the brown study from which she had been aroused.

"Mother Peg would be a natural blessing to some humane society," said Mr. Flint, transferring his gaze from the old crone to the group by whom he was surrounded; "her conduct is sometimes so very affecting," Here he pretended to "wipe away a tear," with a handkerchief such as we are accustomed to see used by a certain Robert Macaire upon the mimic stage.

"Hypocrite!" growled the hag between her clenched teeth.

"But you see my sensitiveness arn't at all appreciated," he continued, alluding to the last remark of Mother Peg. "My sweetness is wasted upon the deserted air—to quote from a popular poet—but I don't complain; it's the reward of the virtuous, and why should Timothy Flint be made an exception?"

A general laugh followed this little piece of moralizing, which was interrupted, however, by a peculiar knock upon the flooring overhead, followed by a low whistle; then succeeded

the trampling of feet, and the countenances of the lawless crew assembled in that desolate den grew pale with doubt and apprehension.

"Why don't you undo the hatches, some of you?" exclaimed Flint, who, of all the crew, appeared undisturbed by the interruption. "It's only one of our fellows with some new acquaintances."

But no one stirred.

"Why, what *has* got into you all?" shouted Flint, in a sudden passion. "Must your captain give orders and execute 'em, too? Here's a pretty set o' cowards for you!" And with such expressions, Flint put his clumsy figure in motion, and withdrew a couple of bars, which served as fastenings to the door of the cellar, or den. The moment he had done so, and before he could find time to ask a question, two great clumsy shoes, yellow with mud, with the toes, like a family of blighted small potatoes, sticking out of each, hastily made their appearance at the trap, followed by a brace of legs, the upper portion of which were encased in a pair of corduroy trowsers, covered with patches, and kept together by numerous pieces of string, giving the proprietor an appearance quite à *l'arlequin*. These evidences of civilization were as quickly followed by a dirty red shirt and a garment very like unto a cartman's frock—and this ill-assorted mass being placed, at last, upright upon the table, there stood confessed an individual, the scarlet brilliancy of whose complexion, flanked by plenty of carrotty hair (a circumstance which had led Mr. Flint, in the exuberance of his wit, to remark

that his associate grew his own hemp, with a view to future contingencies), left no doubt upon the mind of the beholder as to the identity of the individual. It was Job—Flint's collector.

In his case, virtue had been emphatically "its own reward," for the sorry plight in which we find him is proof that he has not yet made a fortune on the strength of his master's liberality.

"It is you, is it?" exclaimed Flint, bestowing upon the legs of the ill-used Job a kick that caused that gentleman to commence rubbing his extremes with renewed vigor; "a pretty fright you've given us! Who's that you've got with you? Why don't you answer, you carrot?" he added, savagely, and before the unhappy Job could open his mouth, there came another kick to keep the company of the other.

"Gentleman—hurt—not dangerous," gasped Job, drawing to a greater distance, and keeping a wary eye on his master's shoes.

"And so," said Flint, "you brought him here that his family might offer a reward for him, and be the means of bringing us up before our agreeable friend and gentle monitor, Jimmy Welsh—hey?"

He made another furious plunge at Job, but the latter dodged it *à la Gabriel Ravel*, and Flint's toes came in violent contact with the wall.

"Oh! you're a precious one!" he gasped, looking fiercely at Job; "a nice pupil you are to come from the hands of Timothy Flint, who took you when you was penniless and

friendless, and gave you the rudiments of an education—even bringing you as far in history as the life of ‘Jack Shephard,’ and the ‘Adventures of Murrell, the Land Pirate’—and this is the return. Catch me taking you to the Chatham theater to see Mose again, or learning you to prig a han’kercher, that’s all!”

“Please, sir,” said Job, deferentially, and with tears in his eyes; “I don’t think you’d so blame me, if you knew all sir, I don’t. May I tell you how it happened, sir?”

“Yes, and be quick about it,” growled the indignant chief, relighting his pipe, which had gone out during his late extemporaneous harrangue.

“Well, sir, you see, the how it came about is this: Me and Gaby Temple—you know Gaby, sir?”

“Is he ‘one of our set?’” asked Flint, abstractedly.

“Oh! regular—out and out—picks a pocket to admiration—is the adoration of the ladies at the P’int’s.”

This allusion to Mr. Gaby Temple’s favor among the women displeased Mr. Flint, who could brook no rivalry in that quarter, and therefore replied rather curtly:

“Hem! I may know such a fellow; but proceed.”

“Well, sir, Gaby and I was a passin’ along the ——— avenue, a little arter dark, discussing the topics of the day and forming a plan how we should be able to give in subscribers for the *Criminal Recorder*—which I, sir, looks upon as a highly creditable effusion; the organ, I may say, of our peculiar society—when we heard some one hollow, loud at first, but then subsidin’ into groans. ‘Gaby,’ says I, ‘here’s



somebody as has hurt his-self bad.' 'I think so, too,' says Gaby. So off we starts; and, arter much pokin' and searchin', we found a gentleman up to his armpits in bricks and mortar, just where the old sewer, you know—"

"Hush!" whispered Flint, with a peculiar expression of the eyes, and his finger pressed upon his lip.

"Well—anyhow," continued Job, getting somewhat bewildered by being thus cut down in his argument, "the gentleman had been wandering about, seemingly in a very precarious state o' mind, and had fell into this hole—as if he'd been lookin' for it on purpose—and there we found him. At first we was going to content ourselves with the money we found on him."

"Money—ha!" said Mr. Flint, brightening up at the sound.

"But Gaby said a reward might be offered, and no one would ever think of looking here, and a good spec' might be made out of it, and—and so we brought him to the crib. And s'help me Moses, if we'd a thought it would a' been so offensive to such a person as Mr. Flint, whom we all venerates—"

"Say no more, Job, you are forgiven; you've been a good boy, Job, and I'll see you rewarded. But, goodness gracious! boys, what *are* you all about? a gentleman dangerously hurt, and claiming our hospitality, to be left shivering in the cold, at such a crisis! Come—be alive, there! Huddle up your rags, you pack of lazy vagabonds, and vamoose elsewhere. What are you staring at, Job? Where's your humanity, that you don't help the unfortunate gentleman down? Poor fel-

low! my heart bleeds for him! the father of a family, I dare say, with ever so many children at home, weeping and wailing for their benefactor!" and Job being somewhat slow in his movements, Mr. Flint concluded this affecting peroration with another kick.

The alacrity with which the ill-used shins and the ten blighted small potatoes disappeared up the trap was quite as wonderful in its way as many of the most inexplicable manœuvres of Herr Alexandre himself; and in a few minutes, a bent-up figure, apparently that of a man somewhat advanced in years, and clad in a black suit of ordinary material—his face as well as his shirt-bosom covered with blood—was handed down, followed by a young girl, and by the individual designated as Gaby Temple, a person like Job, very muddy, very ragged, and very retiring. The round, full moon visage of Job himself was next seen peering, with commendable caution, through the trap, and finding the attention of his preceptor, at that moment, occupied in another quarter, he slid down with the same eel-like alacrity that he had exhibited in ascending, pulled the trap after him, barred it as before, and retreated to hold a conversation with his friend Gaby, in an opposite corner.

The unwonted bustle aroused the hag, who turned towards the group that was bearing the figure of the old man to a heap of rags near the fire.

"More sinister doings—more crime!" she mumbled, addressing herself particularly to Joe. "Ah! you smile now, and think it all very fine—but I tell ye, the day is not far distant when you'll rue these doings—ay, to your hearts' cores, ye will!"

Then, hobbling up to them, with the assistance of her staff she separated the group, who seemed to stand in great awe of her, and gazed earnestly into the stranger's countenance.

"A miracle!" she almost shouted; "rejoice with me, rejoice! there shall shortly be weeping and wailing where all is enjoyment and mirth!"

The crowd shrank back at the woman's unwonted energy and mysterious manner. Even Flint was for the moment awed and confounded.

"Where—where am I!" asked the stranger, feebly, as the woman aided to stretch him on a mattress provided for him by the others.

"Among friends, sir, in spite of all you see around you," replied the woman, encouragingly.

"Who, then, are you?" he asked, peering into her countenance with a look of partial intelligence.

"Walter Lyle," she answered, "you do not know me; and had our circumstances not made us equals at last, you never should. Don't you remember, Walter, poor Edith Gray?"

"Edith Gray!" he returned, in amazement. "Can it be possible?"

"Yes! You think it strange, Walter Lyle, that the proud girl you courted can have stooped so low at last, but it is so. I refused your honest suit for the advantages of a rich husband and a brave town life, and this is what has come of it!"

Lyle (for it was he that, clad in a suit procured by the money bestowed on Violet by the gentle Alice, had fallen in the increasing darkness into one of the man-traps left by some

careless contractor on the road), gazed with an interest which was all the stronger from the similarity of their experience in the pursuit of the gilded bubble, upon the wretched creature before him. And yet Edith Gray was by no means a solitary instance, but only one out of a large number of unfortunates, for the rescue of whose souls, as well as their bodies, charity has heretofore made little or no provision. Strange thoughts came into the head of the ruined man as he gazed upon her. He little knew how strangely he himself had altered. The most intimate of his old acquaintance would hardly have recognised him, had it not been for the slight but ill-clad figure that bent over him as he lay, smoothing the scanty locks on his furrowed brow, and doing everything in her power to render him comfortable. It was Violet—now, as ever, ministering to the wants of her aged parent with an assiduity which no amount of misery could overcome: feeding him, tending him, and, in the best way that she could, making easy his lonely passage to the grave.

The poor fellow, it appears, had been found by some of the vagrant crew among whom his fate had now thrown him, lying in a state of exhaustion by the side of the road, attended only by the child, who was in a condition but little removed from his own. Outcasts as their preservers were from that society whose laws they had banded together to outrage, they had still too much humanity to leave a fellow-creature to perish in such a plight, and they accordingly had transferred him to their den, as we have seen. Even here a question arose as to whether it would be safe to receive him, but the sight of

Violet, who seemed, in her rapt attention to her father, totally unconscious of the presence of strangers, and whose devotion threw about her scantily attired form a halo that transformed her into a ministering angel, disarmed the unfriendly thought, and they were suffered to remain.

Neither Flint nor Job had the slightest remembrance of Lyle or his daughter; their only interview having been of but few minutes' duration; and the money given to Lyle by Violet, amounting to only a few shillings, having been handed over to Flint, those two worthies put their heads together to consider what it was best to do under the circumstances—calculating that, at the least, he had some friends who would not see him suffer, and who would reward them for their kindness.

## CHAPTER XV.

## BETTER PROSPECTS.

SOME weeks passed in this way, and, with the assistance of the rabble crew among whom he had fallen, Lyle grew daily stronger and better. The impossibility of obtaining liquor was the principal agent in his recovery, for there can be no doubt that, had he possessed the means wherewith to continue his strong potations, he must have died long since.

As she saw him hourly acquiring fresh strength, the hopes of little Violet grew stronger also. She no longer thought of death, and a thousand possibilities even worse than death, but a ray of light began to color the cloudy horizon of the future.

"The lady," she mused, "who helped me on the night of the snow storm, when I went out to look for food, told me her name was Alice, and that if I would come to her when we were again in distress she would do her best to relieve us. Oh! if my angel mother could have seen her as I lay upon her breast," thought Violet, whose eyes filled with tears at the recollection.

Some impatient movement of her father caused her to transfer her attention to him. He had partly raised himself from the bed or bundle of straw on which he had been

stretched, and with his head pressed on his hand, was regarding her with an expression of countenance so unusual to him—for there was a look of brightness in it—that Violet almost uttered a cry of joy.

She ran to him instantly.

“You are better now, dear father: you are almost well,” she said, eagerly.

“I shall never be a well man again, my sweet child,” he replied, sadly, “but to see a smile upon your poor faded countenance, so unlike the countenance of a girl, makes me feel for the moment twenty years younger. Do you, my poor Violet, know how rarely it is that you smile?”

“I will smile always, if it will only make you well,” she answered, hopefully. “But I was thinking of something to *make* me smile, dearest father.”

“Pleasant thoughts are, by this time, strangers to both of us,” said Lyle, taking her tenderly by the hand. “Of what was it you were thinking, Violet?”

“Only this. You recollect my telling you of the lady who gave me the so-much-needed assistance not many nights ago, when you was almost starving in the garret?”

“I shall never forget her,” replied Lyle, with an energy he had not seemed to possess. “For her kindness to my daughter God will bless her.”

“Well,” proceeded Violet, “she told me on that occasion that if I ever happened to want assistance again, either for myself or my father, I should go to her; and that is what I

am about to do now, to seek her once more, and ask her to help me to employment. Oh! father—if I can only accomplish that, we may pillow our heads once more under the roof that first gave me shelter.”

“Such a picture shall not be spoiled by my interference. Whatever I may think of it, you shall go, and may God, for your own sake, speed you.”

The alacrity with which the really happy girl departed, filled with the high hope which had newly animated her breast, and now made her something like a woman in more than the mere appearance (for with the new idea she seemed to have grown older), was a good evidence of her earnestness.

“If such a thing might be possible,” thought the ruined man to himself; “but, no,” and the momentary brightness of his aspect faded—“life’s struggles are too nearly past with me to hope for such a termination of my wanderings. I will only pray that God may do for my poor Violet what my own errors forbid that He should do for me.”

With a new feeling throbbing at her heart and kindling in her eye (it was the first time that she had looked forward to the future with any other emotions than those of dread), Violet went lightly on her way to the proud mansion of the Benedicks. The weather was still very cold, and the wind, which blew her threadbare garments about her so fiercely as almost to impede her progress, was laden with a searching dampness which went to the very bone, but the heroic child heeded it not. There was warmth enough in the little heart that



palpitated so strongly beneath her shawl, to enable her to disregard the inclemency of the weather. Before she reached the dwelling of the Benedicks (which she so well—only too well remembered) a slight cough had set in, but that did not trouble her. In fact, she was so full of her father's reformation, and her plans for the future, that she did not notice it.

Violet had pictured the gentle Alice to herself, in her innocence, as the mistress of the mansion, with Heaven knows how many mines of wealth at her command, and she was therefore not a little astonished when she was directed by a proud servant, echoing the orders of his mistress, to the kitchen door.

Mrs. Benedick had observed from afar the coming of Violet, and before the latter had drawn near she had conceived an aversion for the poorly clad, helpless thing. But when she saw her approach and timidly ascend her own front steps; when she heard her with her own hand actually ring her bell, her soul swelled big within her at the audacity of the "thing."

"Some of that Mistress Alice's acquaintance, I suppose!" she muttered to herself, as she gave her footman the order which he had just so pompously imparted to Violet. "I really must put a stop to this sort of business."

What will the reader think, when we tell him that Mrs. Benedick was one of the leading "officers," as they call themselves, of a lady's charitable association, and that her contributions to its fund, though small, it is true, and quarterly

blazoned forth to the world opposite her name in a finely printed circular, were not few or far between!

The warmth of her reception by Alice made up for the pompous insolence of the bloated footman, and Violet had soon unfolded to her friend the simple but affecting history of her little life.

"Poor child!" said Alice, when Violet had concluded, "what a life of suffering must have been yours. I had thought mine bad enough; but a bed and a comfortable home has always been mine, and I have slept many a night in peace while you were wandering the streets, perishing from starvation and cold."

"I ought not to have told you so much," said Violet, perceiving that her companion's eyes were glistening with tears. "I see that my story has given you pain."

"It is a *good* feeling, though a sad one, my sweet little sister," replied the gentle Alice, caressing her and arranging the scattered locks upon her forehead, where the wind had so tossed them about that she looked like a second Madge Wildfire. "But there is time enough ahead to make amends for all. You shall go with me to Mrs. Arthur—a friend of mine, who is not a stranger to such matters, and we will see what can be done to render your condition and that of your father more comfortable. But first we must go and see him."

"Is—is Mrs. Arthur rich?" asked Violet, with hesitating timidity.

"Yes, dear child ; why do you ask ?"

"Oh, nothing ; only rich people don't generally like to be troubled with such as us, and—and I've seen so many dark looks, that I'd rather not see any more, if you please, Miss."

"But Mrs. Arthur, my dear, is not like some wealthy people. It is there that a great mistake is often made. The possession of wealth does not debar us from the indulgence of our humane tendencies ; and there are many who are devoting all their leisure time and much of their spare means to the relief of their less fortunate fellow-beings."

Mrs. Arthur was all that Alice had said of her, and more. Highly accomplished, in the fullest sense of the term, and blessed with a handsome fortune, and a family as different from that of the Benedicks as can well be imagined, she passed a great part of her time in the concerting of measures for the relief of the poor. Although adults claimed a considerable share of her attention, however, it was mainly to the bringing up of the indigent children of the city that her efforts were directed. For Mrs. Arthur well knew that to be of any permanent use, the culture of the mind must be attended to as well as that of the body, and that the cure could only be made radical in the case of the young. There can be not the slightest doubt that if children were always trained as they should be, poverty and vice would be comparatively unknown, and we should not have our attention periodically called to the spectacle of a church-going and highly Christianized community professing to follow the doctrines of Jesus of Nazareth, but practically ignoring him in their every day life.

In company with Violet, Alice took her way to the residence of Mrs. Arthur, who gladly consented to accompany them to the place where Mr. Lyle had found shelter, and where his wants had been kindly supplied.

The arrival of so distinguished a visitor caused an unusual excitement in the place. The guests, one and all, previously seated in a carouse, it would seem, around an old pine table, scrambled out of the way into hidden nooks and corners, while the keeper of the place took a position in front of the doorway, and, without taking his pipe from his mouth, or his arms from behind his back, spread himself as far apart as he could to prevent their further advance.

"Hallo!" he said at last to Violet—"Who are these you've got with you? If it's tracts, your friend may as well be off with herself. We're all Sassenachs here."

"I was afraid it would be so," said Violet, bursting into tears, and clinging to the skirts of Alice's dress, in a violent tremor.

"What noise is that?" asked Lyle, suddenly waking. "My child's voice! Who dares offer harm to her in my presence?"

"There is nothing to fear," said Alice, undismayed by the looks of the place and the character of the inmates. "I came here simply upon an act of charity, and will only trouble you for a few moments."

"Violet," muttered Lyle, crimsoning with shame, "you might have spared me this!"

But Mrs. Arthur's gentle and unobtrusive manner, which made it appear as though she was about to receive instead of confer a favor, soon put Mr. Lyle at his ease. She knew a good mechanic, she said—a poor weaver, who wanted help and would gladly teach Lyle his trade and see to his maintenance in return for such aid as he might render. The only qualifications required were industry and sobriety, and with this little capital Mr. Lyle might make a fresh start in life. She talked so encouragingly that the broken man felt a new spirit—a fresh energy dawning within him. The inertia which had so long taken possession of him seemed falling like an old garment from his limbs. As long as she remained he listened with respectful attention to what his benefactress had to say, and it was only when her gentle form had retreated, in company with his child, that he gave any signs of relaxing. Then the poor man lowered his head upon his breast and wept convulsively.

Strange as it may seem, all the inmates of the wretched hovel seemed to have felt the influence of Mrs. Arthur's visit—an influence which she strengthened by the conferring of something more than mere word-sympathies. It was as if an angel had been among them, and the ray of sunshine that came in with her remained among them long after she had vanished.

Lyle, shortly after the departure of Mrs. Arthur, had fallen asleep—into a slumber such as he had not known for many years—and, in dreams, he saw again the Old Homestead and its cheerful fireside, with all the manifold delights which

had of old encompassed it. The golden sun which rises the next morning upon the desolate hovel on the common witnesses the going forth from it of a new being!

\* \* \* \* \*

Two years have passed away since the gentle form of Mrs. Arthur was found ministering to the comforts of the Lyles, and already a change is visible in their circumstances. Violet, guided by the friendly counsels of her friend Alice, has wonderfully improved in all respects. Tidily dressed in clothes purchased by her own earnings, and made up by her own ingenious hands, she is quite a model of feminine comeliness and neatness. Her face has lost its old look of care and anxiety, and an unprejudiced observer who had never seen her before would even have pronounced her handsome. Her father has been steadily employed at the old weaver's since the day of his rescue by Alice, and though very poor, and not over elegant in his dress, he still looks cheerful and contented. They both have lodgings in a homely but comfortable boarding-house for mechanics, which Alice has found for them, and Lyle has learned to pass the handsome dwelling in which resides his quondam friend, without a twinge of jealousy coming over him.

The room of Violet is something to behold. True, it is only an attic, with a sloping ceiling, and but one narrow window to admit the light. But that window looks out upon the crowded streets and an adjacent park, from which the voices of children come floating upward every fair day in the week to her like the music of silver bells. In the distance,

the river, specked with white sails, gives variety to the prospect. Boxes of flowers, evidently carefully tended, are arranged on the sill, and a bright canary warbles all day long in a cage above her. Violet, for once in her life, begins to have some idea of happiness.

## CHAPTER XVI

## AN IMPORTANT RUMOR.

WHILE the time passed away thus pleasantly within the humble room of Violet, great preparations were a-foot within the stately mansion of the aristocratic Mr. Benedick—who labored very arduously to convince his fellow-creatures that he was one of the happiest men alive, yet who, notwithstanding his enormous wealth and enviable position in society, was, in reality, wretched beyond measure. He had followed for years the golden delusion in which he revelled, and found, too late, alas! that wealth does not always carry happiness in its train. His family, who did nothing that was not strictly in accordance with fashion, were cold and formal, and had long ago lost all feeling in the giddy whirl of splendor to which they had been accustomed, and in which it had been his earnest endeavor through life to place them; while Alice—poor, gentle, and uncomplaining Alice, who would have given her entire love, had she met with any encouragement—he considered too far beneath him to bestow a thought upon. Why, then, did he keep her? Alas! that was a mystery fast locked within the dark recesses of his own haughty heart, and which it was probable would perish with him.

Yet there was *some* sunshine in the rich man's dwelling;



yes, there was some ! At the outset of his dazzling career, it had been Benedick's aim to place himself on a level with the first society in the land : that object attained, and old age beginning to creep on apace, the rich man's dearest aspirations were centred in his eldest child. It was his desire to see her, as she grew in years, make not only a "desirable," but a glorious match ! And, at last, there was prospect of his desires being gratified.

"Have you heard of the new arrival ?" asked the fashionable Minns, one evening. The question was addressed not only to a single individual, but to a group of young men, dressed to the extreme of affectation, who stood upon the steps of the Broadway Racket Court, smoking their genuine Havanas (N. B.—All cigars sold in New York under the name of Havanas may be regarded as genuine), in the faces of the passers-by, and indulging in sundry insolent and indelicate remarks, such as our young blades of fashion appear greatly to delight in.

"Have you heard of the new arrival ?"

No ; nobody present had been so lucky as to hear of it.

"There'll be a fine chance for somebody," continued young Minns, in that mysterious manner which people who know more than others are in the habit of assuming. "Poor fellow ! I quite pity him ! All the intriguing mammas of the city, with their interesting marriageable daughters in tow, will be running after him."

"You are remarkably obscure to-night, Frank," continued

one of his listeners; "suppose you enlighten us as to the mysterious 'him' of whom you speak?"

"Aye! who is he?—come, we're all anxious to fathom the wonderful secret," exclaimed another—no other than that fascinating individual, Mr. Pinkerton Podge.

"Ay, you're all dying to hear it," retorted Minns, striking an attitude, and poking at them successively with his cane; "but what would you give to hear it—jolly dogs?"

"Just two cents—the price of an Evening *Express*, which, no doubt, contains its usual list of arrivals," remarked a would-be wit at his elbow.

"Yes; but not *my* arrival," replied Minns; "he's too green—he's too fresh; took rooms at the Astor, and ordered his supper, not an hour ago. I had it from Stetson, himself, who was quite in a fret between his distinguished guest and the flunkys. A live lord, gentlemen; what d'ye think of that?"

"A lord!" exclaimed his hearers in a breath; and puppydom—or at least an infinitesimal portion of it—seemed shaken to its foundations by the astounding intelligence.

"Yes, gentlemen, a lord—a living, breathing lord; and what's more, as I'm told, a d——d fine, choice, aristocratic young fellow!"

"Shaken out of his sphere by some of the recent convulsions in Europe," remarked Podge, who remembered to have encountered that expression in some paper which he had been reading.

"No," replied Minns, "a mere *voyage de plaisir*, I believe;

though 'tis possible—mind, I only say possible—that he may return to England with a wife.”

“Good gracious!” exclaimed one.

“Must be demented,” chimed in another.

“Cracked—an upper story to let,” added the wit, with a laugh at his own jocosity.

“And pray,” lisped the nonchalant Podge, “pray, who may be the fortunate fair one, whose charms have created so great a revolution in his lordship’s heart? Come, Frank, dem it! let us know.”

“I won’t swear that I’m infallible,” observed Minns, with praiseworthy caution; while he fully believed that every word he was about to utter was downright scandal; and nothing more; “but it is well-known that old Pryce Benedick, the millionaire, has been for years on terms of intimacy with the Southdown family, whom he became acquainted with during one of his European excursions; and, ten to one, the first visit the young lord pays is to Benedick’s—with whose daughter, Julia, he once had a serious flirtation.”

“Humbug! stuff!” exclaimed Mr. Podge, whose face was as blank as a sheet of paper.

“Humbug, is it? stuff, is it?” replied Minns, who knew his friend Podge’s penchant for the lovely Julia, and took a malicious pleasure in teasing him—which he did with so innocent an air, that Podge had not the least idea of his drift, though to every one but the victim it was perfectly transparent. “Why, there’s not a single individual of Benedick’s acquaintance, that has not heard the story from his lips, at

least a dozen times; for it smacks of aristocracy, and the old fellow's devilish fond of his noble acquaintances, let me tell you!"

Alas! poor Podge had heard the story fifty times, instead of a dozen; but had always looked upon it as an ingenious fable of Benedick's own invention; gotten up for the purpose of magnifying his personal importance.

"But come—let's have an excitement of some description. Here's Podge, anxious to bet with somebody. Come, what'll you bet, now, that Lord Southdown's first visit is not to Benedick's?"

"Suppers," replied Podge, snappishly.

"Done!" exclaimed Minns; and, almost ere the words had left his mouth, Major Dabster, U.S.A., approached the group in a very excited manner, much at variance with the coolness of his general bearing.

"Evening, Minns—evening Betts—ditto, everybody!"

The Major did not condescend to particularize Podge, as they happened to be rivals upon a certain tender topic, which they fondly imagined to be concealed from all breasts save their own.

"Heard the news, of course," said the Major, in his usual curt manner.

"What! of Southdown's arrival? Oh, certainly! You're behind the age, Major," and Minns laughed good-naturedly, while the others, not to appear less clever, imitated his example—all but Podge, who couldn't laugh, and wouldn't.

"Of course; everybody's heard it! A contemptible puppy!" growled the Major, between his clenched teeth.

"What! prejudiced against him already, Major? Nay, you should see the man, at least, before you condemn him!"

"And who told you I hadn't seen him, sir?" retorted the Major, with startling earnestness. "I *have* seen him—this hour—this moment, and—I'm sorry for his lordship that I can't say anything in his favor. Those are my sentiments, and I don't care who knows 'em—damme!"

Here the Major brought his heavy cane down with fearful vehemence upon the luckless corners of his friend Podge, who relished the infliction still less than the news he had heard.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Podge, fiercely.

"Beg pardon!" retorted the Major; "was excited.—Don't like it, can take it up!"

Podge had a due respect for gold lace and bright buttons, so he was fain to swallow his anger.

"But where did you see him, Major—where *could* you have seen him?—so newly arrived," persisted Minns.

"Doubt my veracity, sir?" snarled the Major.

"I have too much honor for the cloth you wear, to offer you *such* an insult, Major," replied Minns, sarcastically, touching his hat.

"Ah, lucky you don't—bad humor to-night—would like to get up a row with somebody. Would you believe it, gents, although he has been only a few hours in the country, I actually found the puppy, a few seconds since, carrying on a flirtation with Miss Benedick—a thing *I* have never presumed to do, though I've known her from a baby."

Here the Major paused—having gone further than he

intended—and blushed for his dyed whiskers, which concealed the fact that he was old enough to be twice Miss Julia's father.

"Come, Podgy, acknowledge the corn, and fork over that supper!" shouted Minns, honoring Podge, as he spoke, with an affectionate slap on the back. "The Major's disclosures have made me feel wolfish. I could eat a whole pheasant, and finish off with roast turkey!"

"Oh! certainly—nothing can be fairer," replied Podge, reluctantly suffering Minns to draw his arm through his own. And then, having gotten a little ahead of the rest, he whispered to Minns: "Have you such a thing as a V about you?"

It was the way that Podge always took of paying his bets.

In the meantime, the interesting family whose doings formed so fruitful a theme of gossip for some score or so of male and female hangers-on, who freely partook of the hospitalities of the Benedicks, and repaid them, when their backs were turned, by the most unmerciful abuse, had withdrawn themselves from the gayeties of the town, to taste at Newport the quiet pleasures (so said a Wall Street newspaper of which Pryce was a principal supporter) of a country life. The manner in which this rural quiet is obtained at such places is rather amusing, and to the uninitiated somewhat startling. There fashion holds still its undisputed sway, and retirement is only another word for appearing in public as much as possible, and getting one's name freely handled in certain of

the public prints as the "lovely and bewitching" Miss This, or the "divine and sylphlike" Miss That; the magnificent and queenly Mrs. So-and-so, or the manly and accomplished Mr. Dash. These newspaper compliments are too frequently far-fetched, often paid for by the parties be-puffed, and in the case of the male portion at least, singularly distorted. Little Pettit's legs are like straws stuck into quart mugs, and his face is about as expressive as that of a fish, having retained the early lineaments with which it emerged from the cradle. But the correspondent of the *Universal Truth Teller*, or whatever you please to term it, calls him a "fine, manly fellow, who sits a horse like an Apollo" (a pair of tongs and Pettit would look about the same on horseback). The men show their appreciation of nature by horse-racing, smoking, gambling and drinking to excess, devoting the interval moments to their fair acquaintance, while the latter dress like opera-dancers, play at billiards and ten-pins, and in some cases even indulge in cigars.\* How these delicate and supposed-to-be refined women, nursed in the lap of luxury and educated to nothing calculated to give them trouble, can bring themselves to the performance of acts which any well-bred girl, however humble her condition in life, must shrink from in abhorrence is a mystery.

"A lady," was once an object to be esteemed and admired. "Ladies" now-a-days, as the world goes, wear men's coatees

\* This slight account of the doings at one of our principal "watering-places" is by no means exaggerated: witness the columns of the newspapers for several years past.

and vests, ride their horses in hats, cravats, jackets, and pantaloons, dress like the most abandoned of their sex, and even play at ten-pins. But in proportion as they encourage these eccentricities they cease to be *women*; they are *men* to all intents and purposes, and as they are but a feeble imitation of the genuine article, they cease, of course, to command the respect which would otherwise be due to them, and are talked of by the knowing ones as the latter talk of their dogs and horses. Happily the class of which we speak is a limited one, and there is some hope that the growing intellectual vigor of the time may counteract the pernicious influence of such examples.



## CHAPTER XVII.

## A MODEL BOARDING-HOUSE.

VIOLET—like her humble namesake of the woods and fields—still continues to hold up her head by the wayside, but so feebly, that she is hardly noticed by the crowd that hurries past. There are so many roses and tulips—so many brighter flowers pushing their attractions boldly into notice (not more boldly, however, than the gorgeous sunflower, which passes, nevertheless, for what it is—while it considers itself the most imposing feature in the prospect), that nobody hitherto has observed the modest little thing.

The duties of Violet had become of late more onerous than ever, and it required no little fortitude and perseverance to overcome the difficulties which were continually presenting themselves: for poverty is a hydra-headed monster, to be conquered only by the most fearless and unrelenting of his enemies. After an experience of more than a year at the weaver's, Lyle was taken seriously ill, and being incapacitated from labor, Violet was soon obliged to look out for both: she had a cosy nook provided for him in the house where she lodged; and they might still have been very comfortable, had it not been for the incessant visits of Max Benedick—bent on anything but a benevolent object—and a host of kindred

annoyances, against which she found it difficult to bear up. He had discovered her address by accidentally overhearing a conversation between Violet and Alice, and had made his mother's name an excuse for his calls.

It so happens, that Master Maximus Benedick, one day getting tired of the dusty highway, turns aside to refresh himself in the enjoyment of fresh fields and pastures new. He has not gone far before a lythe and pretty figure, tripping past, arrests his attention. She carries a bandbox before her, and is evidently a sempstress.

Now, Max—Max Benedick, you really are not going to——

Yes he is though;—not to offer to carry the box for her, but to follow her to the place of her destination.

It so happens, also, that another person, about Max's age, but of a somewhat more manly bearing, is bending his steps in that direction. It is Herbert, who is proceeding with all due diligence with a note from cousin Alice to Violet herself. Ever since his first introduction to her, Alice had liked the boy, and although he had long ago left Mr. Benedick's employ, he occasionally called on her, and was more than once made the go-between in the little affairs concerning herself and Violet. Poor cousin Alice! had she known what the result would be of those frequent interviews between the orphans, she would have chosen some other messenger!

Alice, in short, was pretty and interesting, but Violet was still prettier, and all the natural knight-errantry of Herbert's disposition was forthwith enlisted in behalf of the latter.

Herbert, however, had not been by any means an inconstant or lukewarm admirer; but Alice—so easily attached to all others—had been cold to him; and, having found in Violet that unity of sentiment which Alice, as he thought, did not feel or would not acknowledge, what wonder that Herbert transferred his attentions to another shrine, where his offerings were no longer neglected?

Poor Alice! she soon discovered the true state of things, and it might have occasioned some little confusion in Herbert's mind, had he known what a pang the knowledge had given her. But, in this, as in other matters, the gentle girl did not complain. A few tears stole into her eyes when Herbert informed her of the state of his feelings towards Violet, and that was all. Thenceforward, no one should dream that she had ever thought of him as other than a friend.

On seeing a stranger ascending the steps of the house to which his own attention was directed, a pang of jealousy shot through Herbert's breast, and he began to fear that he cared more for the sempstress than either of them had suspected. He was still more bewildered when he found that person to be Max Benedick.

"What does that scented puppy want here?" thought Herbert, quickening his steps. "He's bound upon no good errand, I'll answer for it."

A few light springs brought the sprightly young fellow to the head of the third flight of stairs, where was situated Violet's room. As he gained the landing, a scream caught his ear. He dashed open the door, and beheld Max

Benedick, who had entered on pretence of being the bearer of a commission from his mother, with his arm around Violet's waist, in the act of endeavoring to wrest from her a kiss. The virtuous Max was evidently tipsy, and a blow from Herbert's fist sent him rolling on the floor. He did not wait for redress, on recognising the intruder, but hid his face in his hat, and darted down stairs without casting a look behind.

Herbert was in Violet's confidence in a moment. He had never *told* Violet that he loved her, nor had she the slightest idea that her own feelings towards her fellow orphan were of that intense description which the modern world joins in ridiculing under that familiar name. In their communications with each other they had conducted themselves with the artless unreserve of children, each only too happy to find that there was in the nature of the other something sufficiently congenial to render the association agreeable.

Herbert was monstrously indignant at the treatment which Violet had received at the hands of Max Benedick, and thought he would like to give the fellow a pounding. As that was not practicable, however, at the present moment, he asked Violet if she thought she could muster the confidence to place herself under his guidance, and offered to conduct her to a place where she would no longer be annoyed by such visitors, as Violet complained that this was not the first time she had suffered his insults. She hesitated, but it was only for an instant. Herbert was so young and handsome, and there was such a frank expression in his countenance, that

she could not doubt his sincerity, and she accordingly placed herself at his disposal.

Having arrived (by this time it was quite dark) before the door of Mrs. Blinker's establishment, a succession of double raps brought that lady down to the passage-way, three steps at a time.

Herbert was obliged to wait some time, however, for Mrs. Blinker had a mortal fear of burglars. He reassured her, however, by saying :

"It's only me, Mrs. Blinker—Herbert—on particular business."

A great clanking of bolts and bars and chains ensued, as if some one was undoing the entrance to a prison, and they presently found themselves in Mrs. Blinker's little shop, undergoing her matronly inspection—for she viewed Herbert and his companion with, it must be confessed, a slight tinge of suspicion.

"You need not look so dubiously at us, Mrs. Blinker," said Herbert, smiling ; "it's all right, I assure you."

Whereupon, he told her his story, in as few words as possible, and asked her to take Violet and Mr. Lyle under her temporary charge—a duty for which he promised she should be handsomely rewarded.

Mrs. Blinker generously declared her willingness to do everything that might be desired of her. "The young lady and her father should not want for nothing, that they shouldn't—she should be taken care of as if she was a born princess, that she should," and many similar assurances escaped her.

Herbert, however, had not time to listen to her; and, merely pausing to see what Mrs. Blinker purposed doing for the comforts of her guest, he bade Violet a kindly good night, promising to see her early next morning, bestowed a penny upon each of the young Blinkers (which Mrs. B. embraced the earliest opportunity of taking from them), said good-bye to the widow, herself, and hurried from the place, amid a variety of opposing emotions.

Violet soon found that Mrs. Blinker was not to be judged altogether by her coarse exterior; for the moment Herbert departed, that worthy soul, with many expressions of sympathy and condolence, busied herself in making preparations for the comfort of her guest; and, while the kettle was singing cheerily upon the hob—calling up in Violet's mind, by its simple music, household recollections which she had forgotten for many a long day, and visions of the future, which seemed all too bright to be realised—she drew from its retirement against the wall, assisted by the eldest Blinker—a modest young gentlemen of fourteen, or thereabouts, whom his mother was continually admonishing to “take his fingers out o’ his mouth,”—a small, old-fashioned table, over which she next spread a snow-white cloth, and arranged thereon the appliances for a hearty supper.

Scarcely had she completed these domestic arrangements, when the door swung gently open, and a lady of uncertain age, very youthfully dressed, with rings and pendants in her ears, and bracelets upon her arms, glided with a swan-like

movement into the apartment; and who should next make his appearance but Mr. Ferris, with his seedy coat thrown jauntily back, displaying a white vest and neckerchief, and an eye-glass, which he immediately brought to bear upon the slender figure and downcast countenance of Violet—whom he concluded to be a “devilish pretty girl,” but too poor for one like himself to think of; for Mr. Ferris never came in the neighborhood of a pretty woman without calculating the chances of a matrimonial alliance—to him a *matter of money*, in the strictest signification of the term.

“A young relative of mine,” whispered Mrs. Blinker to the new comers, on witnessing the attention with which they regarded Violet. “My dear, let me make you acquainted with my lodgers. This is Mr. Francis Ferguson Ferris, a poet, and a great biographist. This is Miss Baker, a fashionable milliner, ladies’ dress-maker, and going out to sew by the day, at the most reasonable prices—for further particulars see sign, front of house. There! now you all know one another, sit down and go at it!”

Complying with which polite invitation, Miss Baker placed herself opposite our friend, the “great biographist,” and Mrs. Blinker assigned Violet a seat close to her elbow, as if she was afraid she might try to run away; while the juvenile of fourteen years old mounted himself upon a stool at the foot of the table, and, placing one of his fore-fingers in his mouth, with a blank stare at the tea-pot, awaited further developments.

All being arranged to her liking, Mrs. Blinker took her seat, with the grave dignity of a parson entering his desk and

formed within herself a resolution that she would astonish her young guest with the extent and variety of her acquirements. She therefore commenced (with a sidelong glance at Violet) by fearing that "the hutangularity of the milk distracted from the flavor of the tea, and made it drink obscure," at which announcement Mr. Ferris became very red and full in the face, as if he had had something to do with turning the cream sour, and stared violently at one of the Chinese mandarins upon the mantel-piece; while Miss Baker sneezed in her cup, and fell into a violent fit of coughing. Luckily for Violet, her absence of mind just then prevented her hearing what Mrs. Blinker had said, and she was at a loss to imagine what all this unusual commotion was about; when Mrs. Blinker was obliged, out of the purest good will, to fly round to the side where Miss Baker was sitting, and give her a hearty slapping on the back, by dint of which that young lady was speedily placed out of danger.

"It's nothing," said Mrs. Blinker to Violet, as she resumed her seat; "she's always so; the leastest thing always sets her a sneedgin' and 'spectoratin'. I shouldn't wonder if she burst her biler some of these odd times."

"Miss Baker's late excitement reminds me of a very amusing story that my grandfather was fond of telling," said Mr. Ferris, who was possessed with the laudable desire to give everybody present good cause for a hearty laugh; and then he went off into a long, grave anecdote, utterly without point or wit of any description, and found out before finishing it that he had got hold of the wrong story. This proved to be



such a disheartening, melancholy affair, that it deprived every one of any disposition to mirthfulness, and Mr. Ferris himself became very low-spirited.

But Mrs. Blinker would not be quieted.

"That ain't nothing to what I've heard my husband tell, arter some of his long voyages," said the widow, after Ferris had ended. "Sich sights as he seen, and such scenes as he experienced, was 'awful gardner' to everybody but them what was engaged in 'em, I tell ye! I declare and 'severate,' it used quite to discombobolate me to listen to him. He was a genius, too, was my husband. Why, he once told me that he had the courage to box a compass—some kind o' animal they have at sea—and he could steer a vessel by a needle just as well as if it was a rudder. Could make his own stockings, too; once told me he spun yarn enough, in one voy'ge, to set up a thread and needle store out of it. Oh! he was indeed a wonderful man! Why, he used to lay out on the skylight of a winter's night, with the barometer down to zero, and smoke his pipe, and feel no more effects from it, nor if he'd been a sitting on yander stove. Perhaps, after all, though, it was that gave him such a sculptural voice," she added, thoughtfully. At this moment, one of the juveniles set up a shrill cry in the entry, that forcibly reminded Mr. Ferris of the memorable lines from the "*Lady of the Lake*,"—

"At once there rose so wild a yell

Within that dark and narrow dell,

As all the fiends from heaven that fell

Had pealed the banner-cry of hell!"

In an instant, the wakeful mother was upon the scene of strife; and presently she was heard without, in her shrillest key, reprimanding the youthful delinquent who had occasioned the disturbance.

The endurance of the company had reached its climax, and a roar of laughter followed from the lungs of Mr. Ferris and his fascinating *vis-à-vis*, Miss Baker, which almost drowned the reproaches of the mother and the agonized yells of the infant. Violet felt too weary and too sad to join in their amusement, but even she could not restrain a smile.

Supper being over, Mr. Ferris having no engagements on his hands, as he said, for the evening, he and Miss Baker sat down to a quiet game of checkers; and Violet, seeing Mrs. Blinker engaged upon some clothing for her children, volunteered to assist her. The time passed heavily, notwithstanding, and she was glad when bedtime came; for it gave her an opportunity to think over all that had befallen her during the past twenty-four hours, and to pour forth in prayers, to her Heavenly Father, her gratitude for the miraculous manner in which he had carried her through her trials thus far. That night, too, her innocent couch was visited by pleasant dreams, and they were none the less so, because the figure of her young protector mingled with them.

Herbert proved as good as his word, by calling the next morning, at a reasonably early hour, at Mrs. Blinker's. Unlike his fair friend, Violet, he had passed a troubled night; for he had been endeavoring within his mind to conjure up some method of providing for her, at least, for the present,

without troubling his protector, Mr. Humphreys, whom he thought already sufficiently burthened with himself. He was unable, however, to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion ; and, it was not until the sign of Miss Baker caught his eye, with a written announcement under it, that a young lady was wanted as an assistant, etc., that he began to "see his way out of the woods." The advertisement, however, inspired him with a new idea, and he lightly ascended the stair, and entered what Mrs. Blinker termed, *par excellence*, her parlor—Violet advancing delightedly to meet him as he did so, and then suddenly stopping short, and blushing crimson, as the thought of the brief duration of their acquaintance crossed her mind. But Herbert behaved himself in such a brotherly manner, and was so kind in his inquiries after her welfare, that all diffidence was soon removed, and they talked and jested together as though they had been acquaintances of many years' standing. Herbert asked Violet if she was accustomed to needle-work, and also if she would object to taking employment temporarily as a milliner's assistant ; and her replies being both of them satisfactory, he summoned Mrs. Blinker, and left the rest in her hands. The result was, that before night had come round again, Violet was in the employ of the amiable Miss Baker, and the paper announcing the "want" was taken down to serve for some future occasion.

That morning Herbert went to his office with a lighter heart than usual.

*Chapter 18*

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## SUSPICIONS.

SOME weeks flew rapidly by, during which little that was new occurred with regard to either of the orphans. Herbert had grown more manly in his looks during the interval ; but made, we fear, a very indifferent student-at-law. Instead of his books, he thought of Violet more constantly than ever ; and not an evening passed that did not see him a visitant at Mrs. Blinker's—who had, somehow or other, taken it into her head that Herbert had suddenly fallen into the possession of untold riches ; and who was, therefore, continually telling her neighbors what fine people came to see her ; whereat they wondered greatly, and became stricken with envy, as in duty bound.

But, at last, a small black cloud made itself manifest upon the horizon of Herbert's prospects. We have said that he nightly visited the charming Violet, who, at her employment, and buoyed up by a certain secret conviction which she had long entertained, but never disclosed, was as happy as a nightingale in her humble little room—her bower, as she called it—at Mrs. Blinker's.

Herbert's late hours had not altogether escaped the notice

of the worthy Mr. Humphreys, but he had hitherto imputed it to an increase of business upon the young man's hands, which demanded his presence at the office for a longer period than had formerly been the case. But an anonymous letter, which the old bachelor one day received, opened his eyes to an important fact, of which it is but justice to confess that he had never encouraged a suspicion—viz.: that Herbert was fast falling into habits of dissipation, and that he had already got so far on the George Barnwell track as to keep a mistress in town. We need only here explain, that the ambiguous piece of composition containing this startling intelligence originated in the fertile brain of that versatile and aspiring genius, F. Ferguson Ferris, who had conceived a desperate passion for the gentle Violet, while it was evident that she laid no value upon his attentions, but reserved all her little endearments and favors for that sly rogue, young Herbert.

“As long as he remains, he ranks A, No. 1,” thought Ferris, “while I merely figure as a cipher attached to the skirts of this bewitching little piece of womankind.” With a view, therefore, to a removal of the annoyance, Ferris—after some hesitation, we will do him the justice to say—wrote and dispatched to Humphreys, the location of whose residence he obtained from Herbert himself, the anonymous letter in question.

Herbert was somewhat surprised, therefore, on drawing a chair to one corner of the parlor fire, as usual, to find Mr. Humphreys very grave and very chilly in his manner. The

worthy old gentleman did not invite his protégé to a quiet game of backgammon, as was customary with him, but looked quite sulky and disappointed.

"Dear sir," said Herbert, going to Humphreys, and laying his hands upon his shoulders, "you do not seem well to-night; or, is it possible that I can have done anything to offend you?"

Mr. Humphreys tried to look sternly at the boy, but found that a more difficult matter than he had imagined.

"Pray, what have I done?" asked Herbert, in unfeigned surprise. "Come, Mr. Humphreys," he added, with a touch of humor, "remember I am a lawyer, and won't endure to be condemned without being told my offence."

"There's no guilt in that open, manly countenance," thought Mr. Humphreys, as he gazed earnestly at Herbert's face, now flushed with healthy excitement. "Do you know anything of the matter of which this letter treats?" and he handed it to Herbert, who suddenly blushed deeply, and became much confused.

"Have a care, Herbert," said Mr. Humphreys, in a tone of admonition; "if you are indeed the sort of character mentioned in that scrawl—you know me, boy!"

Herbert made no reply to this terrible speech; but, handing the letter back to Mr. Humphreys, burst into a laugh so hearty that it tended the more to convince that individual of the young man's innocence.

"Well, Herbert, what say you to this?"

"That it is an infamous slander against my reputation!"

replied Herbert, with the fire of indignation burning in his large earnest eyes ; “ and that I will not fail to avenge myself, at the first opportunity, upon the infamous scoundrel who could so heartlessly set to work to accomplish another’s ruin ! ”

Mr. Humphreys, with a tear of emotion in his eyes, silently pressed the lad’s hand in his own.

“ I was right, then, my dear boy, in my former conjectures,” said Mr. Humphreys ; “ and it *was* business, and not pleasure, that was the cause of these late hours at night ? ”

“ Mr. Humphreys,” Herbert answered, in his frankest manner, “ dissimulation is an acquirement, in which, thanks to my bringing up, I am little schooled ; and I will not attempt to conceal the truth from you, now that you have asked it. And, when you have also heard my motives, sir, you will not, I am sure, condemn me for my silence hitherto ; for, had you required it, I should at any time have been as ready to give an explanation as I am now.”

“ My brave—my noble boy ! ” murmured Mr. Humphreys, regarding him with all the affection of a father.

Herbert then detailed to him the history of his acquaintance with Violet, from the moment of their first interview at Benedick’s, to the time of narration ; and he confessed his motives for not intruding her upon the attention of his guardian in a manner so ingenuous, that, while Humphreys blamed him for his backwardness, he could not help praising him for his candor.

“ And it is to this fair damsel in distress, that you, Master Herbert, have devoted so much of your leisure,” said Hum-

phreys, laughingly. "But look ahead for breakers, as you yourself used to express it, and see that you prove not, after all, a second Don Quixote, my lad!"

There was a momentary pang at Herbert's heart, as he thought of the possibility of *her* refusing him, but the old sunshine returned to his face, which was like an April sky over which a cloud has just passed, when he remembered her unvarying kindness, and the many little favors, flowers and the like, which he had, from time to time, received at her hands.

"I have no fear, sir, on that score," he cheerfully replied; "and, as for that mysterious letter which has given us all so much pain, I think I know the author, and his reasons. And he shall confess them, too, or my name's not Herbert."

"Let us do nothing hastily," said Mr. Humphreys; "I must myself see and converse with this paragon of perfection—as much out of curiosity, as for your sake, you young rascal! If she is all you say she is, and I don't doubt it, we may yet find something that—"

"That what, sir?" asked Herbert, anxiously.

"Hem! we shall see," said the old gentleman, quietly wiping his spectacles.

The next morning, Mr. Humphreys was stirring betimes, and he and Herbert went together into the city—the latter unconsciously revealing by the way the location of the Blinker domain—which might be said to be placed in the very centre of lower Kidd-dom. Mr. Humphreys accompanied his young friend as far as Chambers street, and excused himself from proceeding further in that direction, on the plea of business



elsewhere. Left to his own reflection, he had soon traversed the distance which separated him from the subject of his thoughts.

When Violet was informed by the "flustrated" and "discombobolated" Mrs. Blinker, that there was an elderly gentleman inquiring for her in "the parlor," her heart began to flutter like a bird imprisoned against its will; for, of course, she could only think that Max Benedick had come hither for the purpose of tormenting her—a movement which, now that she had tasted the blessings of liberty, she was determined to resist to the extent of her abilities. Her surprise may readily be conceived, when, in place of the expected visitor, the countenance of an entire stranger met her gaze.

"Hum! Herbert's a good portrait painter," he thought, as he surveyed her. Then, as if he had become suddenly aware of his abstraction, he rose, and apologised in the kindest manner for occupying her time; but, the truth was, he "had come upon a very delicate errand, in behalf of his young friend, Herbert, whose guardian he had the happiness of being."

Although Violet was perfectly conscious that she had done nothing which could be construed into wrong, yet she hung her head, and blushed, and looked, it must be confessed, very much like a guilty individual. She was fully prepared, however, in case Mr. Humphreys placed a ban upon Herbert's visits, to declare her *predilection* for him, and to defend her right of honoring him with it just so long as she felt pleased to do so.

Mr. Humphreys, however, had no such idea.

"Herbert," he said, very kindly, "has told me your history, and I have done him the credit to acknowledge that he has played his part in a manner to reflect honor upon his family."

"He has none, sir," quickly responded Violet, again blushing.

"Oho! mistress—so intimate with the young rascal's affairs already," thought Humphreys. "Still, however, I cannot but think that your position here is hardly a pleasant one."

"Oh, sir," she replied, with tears in her large, bright eyes; "far more pleasant than you can have any conception! If you but knew from what I have escaped!"

"Were you not kindly treated, then?" asked Humphreys, who had evidently an object in putting these questions.

"Heaven knows!" she answered, "that I desire to cast blame on no one, but that I have been most shamefully neglected and abused, that Heaven be my judge."

"And you are perfectly contented here?"

"I have no other refuge; after what I have endured, this humble dwelling seems to me a palace. Oh! sir! what do I not owe to Herbert—that is, to Mr. ——" and here Violet stammered, and lost herself in confusion.

"Nay, my dear young lady," said Humphreys, taking one of her little hands in his own; "have no shame on account of your feelings; they would do honor to any she that ever breathed. But my language, thus far, has mystified you, I am afraid. Plainly, then, and without reserve, I come to

offer you a home superior to that you now enjoy ; a home where waving fields and sparkling waters form a prospect infinitely preferable to the piles of brick and mortar which everywhere meet the sight in this detested city ; a home where the rumbling of carts is replaced by the singing of birds ; a home, in short, where you may one day become"—here he sneezed, coughed, and blew his nose in some confusion—the word *mistress* being a little too abrupt for such a brief acquaintance.

"I appreciate, believe me, your kind intentions," returned Violet, "but, I have resolved never to allow myself to become a burden to any family while my poor fingers are capable of wielding a needle."

"That's noble—noble and frankly spoken, and I like it!" said Humphreys, bringing his cane to the floor with an emphasis. "But, you see, Miss, I have *no* family of my own ; a whimsical, crotchety old bachelor, whom nobody cares for and whom nobody, perhaps, will follow to his grave!"

"Nay, sir—there is one who loves you, I am sure, with all the affection of a son!"

"There may—yes, there may be one ; but, indeed, miss, I am still very lonesome ; for Herbert, you see, is in the city all the day, and goes *somewhere* a-visiting of nights, and I should really consider it as a favor, if I could find some one, to—to—"

"Take a little care of you?" suggested Violet.

"How well you comprehend me," answered Humphreys.

"But then," said Violet, "what would the world be apt to say?"

"The world may—hum! hum! I'm afraid I was going to say something strong then," muttered the old gentleman. "But really, miss, I should think that the little experience you have had in such matters would have led you by this time to care very little for what 'Mrs. Grundy' may say or think."

"Your last words, dear sir, have convinced me," she answered; "I shall be ready to accompany you when you will."

And, that very week, Knickerbocker Lodge was the happy and contented home of a new inmate.

"Deary me and souls alive!" exclaimed Mrs. Blinker, on hearing the news of Violet's good fortune; "if it ain't absolute wonderful! somebody's always having of rich relations turning up, and going off in carriages and what not. Who knows," she said to Miss Baker, who had become really attached to Violet, and had treated her very kindly during her stay with her—as one evening they sat "discussing of" the question in the former lady's parlor—"who knows but my turn may come next? I've heerd my old husband say, in his sculptural voice, that he'd a rich brother who owned a ship somewhere, and it warn't unlikely I might disinherit his properties at some futur' period."

"Life's all one egregious lottery, my dear Blinker," sighed Miss Baker—who had for years been angling after hopeful

young men, without getting anything more than an occasional nibble; "the more I think of it, the more it reminds me of the last chance I took in McIntyre's great concern. Generally, when I had the temerity to go in for a ticket, I came out blank, and once, when forty-one drew the prize, I came out forty-two, and blank as usual."

"Be you so old as that?" asked Mrs. Blinker, innocently.

"Pshaw! dear—I meant my ticket; forty-two was the number of my ticket!"

"Lotteries are injurious," said Blinker, gravely; "they pervert the morals, and lead to worser practices. Many a young pernicious has been ruined by 'em. Remember the fate of my Jacky!"

"And what become of Jacky?" asked Miss Baker, with much interest.

"Why, he got a situation in an exchange office, to make fires and keep an eye on the customers; and then they promoted him to a clarkship, and now he's in a bank, and wears standin' collars and shovel-tailed coats, and don't know his own mother—the undutiful scapegoat! Last time as he seed me, he wouldn't sit in my cheers, 'cause they looked greasy; didn't believe Sardanapalo was his brother, 'cause he had red hair and couldn't see straight; and called me vulgar, for axin' him if he hadn't like to eat some bread and 'lasses, or su'thin. Vulgar! thank the stars!—I knows better not to spell vulgar with a *wee*!"

"We are all weak-minded creatures, and are apt to forget ourselves at times," rejoined Miss Baker, with praiseworthy

consideration. "For myself, I acknowledge that I have long had the weakness to encourage hopes of the return of a rich uncle, who went to Havana some years ago, and was supposed to have been shot in a duel with some over-proud Castilian. Should he return (and I have dreamt of that occurrence three times, already), believe me, Blinker, you shall not be forgotten, nor your pretty cherubs."

"Will you gim me some, when you come inter your fortin'?" suddenly asked the fourteen-year-old, looking up from a cracked slate, on which he had been drawing rude representations of scaffolds and similar objects.

"Of course, Sandy, I shall not forget you, my love."

"Oh! crackey! that'll be better nor pickin' up old iron, every time a feller wants a little change, won't it?"

"Napalo!" exclaimed Mrs. Blinker, holding up her finger.

And Napalo became as silent as the grave.

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and Miss Baker threw up her hands.

"My uncle! 'tis he, I'm sure 'tis he!"

And making to the door to open it, she came very near precipitating herself into the arms of a dark-bearded gentle man, with a hooked nose, who exclaimed, in a strong, Jewish accent: "*Any old clo' to shell?—any old clo'?*"

## CHAPTER XIX.

## A NEW HOME.

WE honor with all our heart the poet who first sung the glories of the pleasant summer-time; that man had a soul superior to the ordinary common-places of life, and would never betray the confidence of a friend, nor take unfair advantage of an enemy, we'll answer for it! It is June, and Summer, with her apron full of buds and flowers, has succeeded quietly to the genial Spring. The trees revel in blossoms, and the gardens are sprinkled o'er with them, until the leaves are almost hidden from the sight. Groves, laden with perfume, yield up, though not without some murmuring, their aromatic treasures to the enticing breeze, which flies away over hill and dale, to delight for a moment with its sweets the denizens of the distant and weary city. Crickets and grasshoppers have taken undisputed possession, with the grave and leisurely beetle, of every tuft of grass, and the whole animal kingdom seems to have been aroused, by the shaking of Summer's airy wand, into sudden vitality. The sky is blue and clear, though occasionally a collection of snowy clouds scuds rapidly athwart the broad expanse. The atmosphere, too, has a refreshing clearness, and villages, with their white-walled cottages and glistening spires, loom out from amid the

clustering foliage on the distant hills. Craft of all kinds, with their snowy sails set to catch the breeze, go sailing by upon the bosom of the majestic river; and in the shrubbery you may hear the constant murmur of the busy bee. Birds sing in the woods, and cattle low upon the meadow; the squirrel, too, is abroad, gathering food for her little ones; and occasionally may be encountered one of Izaak Walton's followers, angling for fish within the glassy depths of some pellucid streamlet.

To a scene of this description would we direct the attention of the "gentle reader." It was in fact, such a day and such a scene as Leigh Hunt has depicted in his introduction to Rimini:

"A morn the loveliest which the year has seen,  
Last of the spring, yet fresh with all its green;  
For a warm eve, and gentle rains at night  
Have left a sparkling welcome for the light.  
And there's a crystal clearness all about:  
The leaves are sharp—the distant hills look out—  
A balmy briskness comes upon the breeze,  
The smoke goes dancing from the cottage trees;  
And, when you listen, you may hear a coil  
Of bubbling springs about the grassier soil;  
And all the scene, in short—sky, earth and sea—  
*Breathes like a bright-eyed face that laughs out openly.*"

At the distance of a few miles from the city, in a sequestered spot upon the banks of the Hudson river, and which the modern sticklers for "improvement" appear to have altogether overlooked in the intensity of their calculations,



a small rustic cottage peers cunningly out from the midst of a sea of leaves and vines in which it is embedded. The road to this pleasant retreat is by a narrow lane, formed by a grove of trees, whose branches almost interlace above the head in the shape of an arch, and the entire premises attached to the rustic cottage before mentioned, have been converted, by the skill and taste of the proprietor, into a blooming garden. In front, a well-graded lawn slopes gently downward to the water's edge, and a summer-house is built at a little distance out upon the water, to which access is gained by a miniature bridge.

Such was the picture upon which Violet, throwing open the latticed windows of her little chamber, on the morning after her removal from the city, found her eyes riveted, as if by a spell. It was some time ere she could realize all that had transpired—so rapidly had events followed each other during the last twenty-four hours. For, the reverses of her father had taken so deep a hold on her mind, that her meeting with Mr. Humphreys, and the subsequent conversation she had had with him, seemed like a vision among the dark realities by which she was surrounded. She pressed her hand upon her forehead, to collect her scattered senses, and gazing slowly round the apartment, strove to recall the incidents of the preceding day. Everything there spoke of cleanliness and comfort—so that it was evident she was not at Mrs. Blinker's. A small hanging frame, filled with books, adorned one side of the wall, and several prints, suggestive of benevolence and moral behavior, were dispersed about. Gradually, she began

to remember all that had happened, and, turning again to the window, she was about to fix her gaze once more upon the entrancing scene before her, when her quick eye detected the figure of an old man, of slightly stooping form, in morning-gown, cap and slippers, among the shrubbery. Violet immediately ran down to the lawn, and out into the garden, where, sure enough, she found the good Mr. Humphreys giving directions to his gardener about the disposition of some plants.

"Ah! up and abroad thus early, my young friend?" exclaimed the good old gentleman, extending his right hand to Violet, with a cordiality which convinced her that she had no ceremony, such as is usual upon a first acquaintance, to contend with here.

"It is not early for me, I assure you, sir," she replied, smiling. "It has always been my custom to vie with the lark in rising—for father used to say, that

"Early to bed, and early to rise,  
Makes one both healthy, wealthy, and wise.'"

"Your father was right, my girl, though he appears to have forgotten some of his own teachings. Let that simple distich be ever your motto; and, my word for it, you'll not find it far out of the way. I know," said Mr. Humphreys, "for I've tried it."

"There is no lack of opportunities here for the cultivation of at least one of these virtues," observed Violet, looking at the sleek and ruddy countenance of the serving man, and then

at the plants. "Such employment must be exceedingly beneficial to the health."

"You are a lover of flowers, then?"

"Who is not, sir? To me, nature is ever preferable to art."

"I'll be sworn you love poetry, too!—and you need not fear but you shall have ample opportunity for the gratification of both your propensities. But, come—come along with me; and I'll give you a lesson or two in botany, and endeavor to explain to you the nature and organization of those beautiful objects, which you admire so much at a distance."

And Mr. Humphreys seized a small garden hoe and a rake, and, bidding Violet follow him, wandered off to another part of the garden.

The hour which succeeded to this was a little era in Violet's existence. Mr. Humphreys was evidently an accomplished botanist, and he entered into the labor of explaining to his young friend the characters of the different plants which came under his observation, the names for the different sections of those plants, and the laws by which they were governed, with an earnestness which proved to her that the old gentleman considered it no displeasing task. While they were in the midst of their studies, in which Violet had embarked with great interest and zeal, a servant came to tell them that breakfast was waiting; and on returning to the cottage, which was quite an architectural bijou, in its way, they found a table set for three upon a little platform or piazza, facing the lawn and river. As they approached the dwelling, Violet wondering all along who could be the third person that was to join them in

their repast—a staid, matronly looking woman, in a cap, and very plainly, but neatly attired, stepped out upon the piazza, and the young stranger was forthwith introduced to Mrs Marston, Mr. Humphreys' housekeeper.

If that morning meal, simple and plain as it was, did not pass off pleasantly, it was no fault of Mr. Humphreys; for the old gentleman appeared to be possessed of a fund of anecdote, and even Mrs. Marston, notwithstanding the natural quietness and gravity of her demeanor, could not help smiling occasionally at the heartiness with which Violet laughed at her protector's witticisms. There was but one drawback upon her happiness, and that was, that her father could not be there to participate in her feelings.

Mr. Humphreys, however, had procured him an entrance at an hospital sustained by private benevolence in the city, and had promised to do something for Lyle's advancement when he got well again.

To Violet, that night, the Old Homestead began to loom up in the distance, brighter than ever.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE.

LORD SOUTHDOWN—the personage whose recent arrival had formed the staple of conversation for the party of young bloods mentioned in a preceding chapter—was what you might call a favorable specimen of the more youthful of the English aristocracy; not one of those water-eyed, pale-faced, half-developed beings, whose proceedings attract in an equal degree the attention and the ridicule of all London; but a tall, well-shapen, healthy young fellow, of prepossessing appearance, and manly, unaffected bearing, whose acquirements extended beyond the breaking in of a horse, or the drinking of immoderate quantities of bad French wines. Well-versed in the literature of his own age, as well as of those which had preceded it, he could sustain a conversation in a manner to render it interesting to his hearers; and long acquaintance with the best of English society had imparted to his manners an ease and polish which many a neophyte in fashion would have given a lock of his hair to imitate. In dress, Lord Southdown was elegant, without being opposed to taste; and, though he had, undeniably, a proper idea of his position, yet he did not think it necessary to acquaint the world (as many fools do) with that weak

point in his character. When we have said thus much, we have said nearly all; for, alas! Lord Southdown, though only in his twenty-fourth year, was but an automaton—whose daily duties lay in eating, drinking, and sleeping, like the rest of folks, but scarcely anything more. He frequently bestowed an alms, but not out of any truly generous impulse—simply because it put him to too much trouble to refuse. He had, in fact, but little genuine feeling within so prepossessing an exterior, and all the bright glances and languishing looks that assailed him fell to the ground as harmless as so many wooden arrows, which we see used by children in their sports.

For the rest, Lord Southdown had a ready flow of wit, delighted in sarcasm—when his game was worth the powder—could carry on a flirtation with any of Eve's daughters after the most approved manner, and, what was of far greater consequence than anything beside, he was immensely wealthy!

Therefore, there was quite a fluttering of hearts and ribbons, when it was announced that the distinguished young foreigner, Lord Southdown, was about to improve an acquaintance with the most eligible and select of New York society.

His earliest proceeding was, of course, to cultivate the acquaintance of the Benedicks, whose great wealth raised them as nearly to his own level as it was possible for any one to approach, without the adornment of actual rank. Julia, whose fashionable education had progressed in the most rapid and astonishing manner, and who remembered Lord South-

down as a child, having accompanied her father in one of his voyages to Europe, was the first to fall in love with him. Her imagination—distorted out of its natural bent by constant intercourse with travelled apes—dwelt continually upon the rapturous idea of having a nobleman for a husband, and of being escorted about among the proudest circles of society, in the larger European cities, as *my Lady Southdown*. As for the establishment which she had pictured to herself, the most aristocratic families in Great Britain would have shrunk at once into utter insignificance by the comparison.

It may well be imagined that Mr. Benedick's ambition was excited at the brilliant prospect; and, as for his daughter, there was no family within the entire metropolis worthy of her patronage, and many well-meaning, inoffensive personages found themselves cut in consequence.

For some months, young Southdown carried on his innocent flirtation with Julia—who had grown to be a really beautiful woman—until, at length, he began to find himself more deeply interested than he had at first bargained for; and he was fain to fly from the dangerous snare set for him by the dazzling eyes of the coquettish beauty. It was, therefore, with a feeling of dismay and misgiving that the Benedicks heard him, one evening, announce his intention of leaving their delightful abode, for the purpose of proceeding on his tour towards the south.

There were two, however, to whom this intelligence afforded infinite delight; these were no other than the ferocious Major Dabster, U. S. A., and the tender-hearted little fop,

already known to our readers under the romantic and somewhat high sounding title of Pinkerton Podge. Each, therefore, grinned his delight in his own peculiar way, but said nothing; while the clever Cousin Minns, finding all his vast borrowing calculations upset by this unexpected news, looked cadaverous, and, turtle-like, withdrew within himself for the remainder of the evening.

But, poor Julia—we will not attempt to describe her feelings! Yet, all hope was not lost; and, whenever she found herself *tête-à-tête* with Lord Southdown, behind the ample window curtains of the drawing-room, or in some corner remote from the rest of the company, she held her breath, and strove to ease the painful throbbing of her heart, in the hope—growing each hour more vague and indistinct—that the young lord *might* have *something particular* to say to her. But in vain did she afford him every opportunity of touching the delicate subject; his lordship was “up to snuff,” and placed far too high a value upon his personal liberty, to suffer himself to be made the dupe of a woman’s wiles, at his tender age.

There was no help for it, however; Lord Southdown yawningly said that he really must go, and—Lord Southdown *went*.

Then commenced a scene of reproach and recrimination, which must have been quite refreshing to the parties engaged in it.

“Silly girl,” exclaimed the almost distracted mother, as the family party sat alone in the brilliantly decorated drawing-rooms, after the departure of the company. “You have lost



an opportunity such as falls in the way of few young ladies of fashion. We shall become the butt of all the *haut ton* of New York for this unfortunate slip that you have made."

"My dear mamma—it was not my fault; I did my best to—to arouse a kindred feeling in his breast, I'm sure," replied Julia, who looked as though she was ready to burst into tears.

"But this is always the way," continued the disappointed mother; "one is certain of having one's fondest aspirations disappointed, just as everything appears to be coming to an *ultimatum*."

"He certainly seemed interested in me," said Julia—who could not avoid smiling at her mother's indiscriminate use of words.

"Interested, child? If the young puppy's conduct wasn't next door to proposing, I don't know what could be. But he'll get punished one of these odd days with all his *finesse*."

"You do not suppose, mother, that he will mention us abroad, in connection with this subject?" asked Julia, nervously.

"Let him!" retorted the indignant matron, with a look of defiance—"let him, if he dares—that's all! Thank heaven, there's such a thing as law in this world; and if the puppy presumes to cast any imputations upon us, he'll soon find himself in limbo, I warrant."

"Tut, tut! Jane," said Mr. Benedick, who had been absorbed until now in a reverie—gazing at the figures formed by the coals in the grate, until his sombre thoughts were put to flight by the discovery among them of a family picture, in which he distinctly saw Lord Southdown leading his daughter to the

altar. "Tut, tut! this language after all may be uncalled for. We all know, my dear, that the young lord's object in visiting this country was to inspect its beauties, and observe everything that he might deem worthy of remark. In a few months, doubtless, he will return, and make an offer of his hand. Alliances between families of our standing, my dear, are not contracted suddenly. Indeed, it would derogate from our dignity to transact such matters in a hurry. The vulgar only set such examples."

"He may set as many samples as he pleases," returned Mrs. Benedick, pettishly; "but we won't be drawn suddenly into any alliance—it's not to be borne by people of our position—all I want is fair and open dealings—and I'll have 'em."

As this formidable argument of his wife's was, happily, unanswerable, Mr. Benedick merely ejaculated: "Oh, ay!—to be sure!" and was about to relapse into his former reverie, when a series of piercing screams, from the direction of the library, aroused him from his apathy.

"It's only that child, Alice," remarked Mrs. Benedick, listening for a repetition of the sounds, which, however, were not repeated. "Something has frightened her, I suppose—just as I was frightened, when I was engaged in the peroration of the *"Three Spaniards."* What a delightful, frightful, mysterious book that was! Have you read it, Julia?"

"Not that I remember, mamma," replied Julia, listlessly; "who was it by?"

"By one Mrs. Otranto, I believe, child! Oh! she's a

powerful writer, Mrs. Otranto—all over trap-doors and secret passages !”

At this moment, Mr. Benedick, who had left the room at the commencement of this interesting conversation, appeared at the door, looking as pale as a sheet, and appearing to be agitated by some mysterious emotion.

“She’s gone! I can find her nowhere—our Alice!” he exclaimed, rather wildly.

“Gone!” shouted Mrs. Benedick, starting fiercely up from the heavily-stuffed Boston rocker, in which she had been sitting. “Why, let the base creature go then! let her go, like an ingrate that she is, from the family she has so long disgraced by her presence. What else could be expected from the company she kept?”

“Yes, gone; but not with her own consent, I fear,” replied Pryce, in a wandering, vacant manner, strangely opposed to the usual imperturbability of his demeanor. “When I entered the library all was darkness; but, lighting a lamp, I proceeded to scrutinize the room. The great arm-chair was overturned, as if by violence; the little articles of embroidery, upon which Alice had been employed, were scattered about upon the floor; and, near the spot where she had been sitting, I found—”

“A miniature, of course.”

“THIS !”

And Mr. Benedick held up to the view of his wife and daughter—a black, mysterious looking article, of which it could hardly be said that it had any shape at all, and which

bore a singular resemblance to an old-fashioned coal-scuttle, rescued from the ruins of a conflagration. In fact, it was what might, with propriety, have been demonstrated a *shocking bad bonnet!*

Mrs. Benedick started suddenly away from the horrid object, pressed her hand upon her temples, and uttering a hysterical exclamation, fell in a swoon upon an adjacent sofa.

The real cause of Mr. Benedick's emotion was contained in a small scroll of paper, which he had found upon the library table, and which bore the following words—alas! too comprehensible to him for whom they were intended:

*"Bask yet a little longer in the deceptive sunshine which your exertions have created! A few brief months will still be granted you; but the hour is at hand when the wronger and the wronged shall be confronted."*

Weeks passed away, and Benedick, after a few ineffectual attempts to discover what had become of Alice—not that he was particularly ambitious of her society, but fearing that she was in possession of a secret, the divulging of which would have been attended with very unpleasant consequences to himself—gave up the search in despair, and endeavored to persuade himself that all was not as bad as he expected. Still, however, despite of his unusual carelessness, a certain vision would constantly obtrude itself upon his meditations, and his dreams were troubled with unpleasant images. Under pretence of following the example of the London aristocracy, but really from the dread that he might utter in his sleep words that he would not have uttered to living

being for his life, he had caused a separate sleeping apartment to be fitted up for himself, and thus his time was passed in a variety of vague apprehensions which soon—too soon—began to render existence a burthen to him.

Such was the condition of the rich man's conscience, when he received a temporary relief by the unexpected return of Lord Southdown, from his brief southern tour. The fact was, the young lord had been unable, notwithstanding his most arduous exertions, to banish from his thoughts the image of the fascinating Julia, and he had at length returned, post haste, to offer up his hand, and rank, and riches, upon the resplendent altar of that young lady's vanity.

Then what a triumph was it for the Benedicks. Those who had made sneering remarks upon the disappointment of that ambitious family, consequent upon the young nobleman's sudden flight, looked sheepish, and began to talk less of other people's affairs, and more of their own; while Major Dabster, U. S. A., grew to be ten times as insulting as usual, and offered snuff to his late rival, Pinkerton Podge, to show that he bore no malice, whatever other people might think of him. As for Cousin Minns, his relative had promised to set him up in business if matters took the desired turn; and, in a few days that amiable young man was seen dashing along Broadway, the master of an elegant tandem—purchased upon the strength of the cool twenty thousand which his uncle had loaned him.

In twelve months, Cousin Minns failed ; but, he still kept the tandem.

The wedding was all that could be desired ; the most aristocratic and exclusive church in New York had been selected as the scene of the imposing ceremony, and the most fashionable clergyman in the parish engaged for the occasion. The organist and singers were on a par with all the other arrangements, and everything was "pomp and circumstance" within that crimson-cushioned, wilton-carpeted, and highly-gilded edifice. Amid the heavy peals of the organ, which many thought, however, quite unsuited to the operatic music which had been selected for it, the bridal party entered ; a thousand whispered remarks, such as : "Do you think so ?" "Oh ! decidedly !" "Not enough silver in the wreath !" "Interesting only—" "Enormously rich they say." "What a *distingue* air he has !" immediately ran round the church ; and then, amid the profoundest silence, the "Gorgon knot," as Julia's mother persisted in terming it, was tied, and Pryce Benedick, the American merchant, was father-in-law to a lord !

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"Adieu, for ever, to the comforts of single blessedness," Lord Southdown wrote home to his friends, as soon as the excitement and novelty of married life had somewhat subsided on his part (on that of Julia it had not yet commenced). "I have taken unto myself a wife, discarded all my bachelor habits, and intend, hereafter, to live a quiet,

sober, and retired life, with none for my companion but that gentle, lovely, and unsophisticated being, whose sole delight is in the enjoyment of my society!"

"*Do you?*" thought Julia, as her husband, in the candor of his honest nature, read to her the letter of which the above is an extract. "Not if *my* inclinations are consulted in the matter."

The first thing which opened the young lord's eyes to the true character of her whom he had made choice of as companion for life, was her extravagance in matters appertaining to dress, and which she indulged in with such an utter lack of what he called taste, as to excite his irrepressible disgust.

They were passing the "honey-moon" at the country-seat of Mr. Benedick; and Julia, surrounded by a tribe of milliners and mantua-makers, was getting ready the dresses in which she intended to make her *début* among the fashionable circles of the English metropolis. Lord Southdown looked at all these preparations, and said nothing; but he inwardly determined that, come what would, she should not make her appearance in his company, in certain of the dresses which she had selected, at any of the aristocratic houses in London or Paris.

One month flitted rapidly away, and, at the expiration of that period, Julia's haughty and imperious disposition began to make itself manifest. She did a number of things in direct opposition to her husband's stated wishes; and, on one occasion, attempted to "ride over him rough-shod," as the saying is; but, here she found that she had not rightly

estimated Lord Southdown's character. Julia had expressed her intention of calling upon a certain family, of whose members, individually and collectively, Lord Southdown had by no means a very high opinion. Her husband hinted that she had better discontinue their acquaintance, as it was one he did not like, and gave his reasons—which, to use an Irishism—were very reasonable. Lady Southdown differed in opinion with his lordship.

"But, my dear," said Lord Southdown, "I am up to my ears to-day in writing, and the least you can do is to postpone this visit until some future time."

No; she had her mind set upon going to-day, and go she would, if she had to go alone. His lordship very quietly laid down his pen, which he had at that moment been using, and took in his own the uplifted hand of the irate beauty, while he looked into her eyes with a cool, but severe expression, under which her own involuntarily quailed.

"Julia," said he, sternly, but in a subdued tone of voice, "you are a deep girl, and I give you credit for your shrewdness; but, *you have mistaken your man*; and, here on this spot, and for the first and last time, I tell you that such conduct will not answer. Go directly to your room, throw aside those idle jewels, which here are superfluous—for there's no one to admire them—and come to me at dinner-time dressed plainly, as you know that I prefer to see you dressed. I am by this time well aware that it was not for love—not for myself—that you married, and though I shall not oppose your pleasures, so long as they are kept within proper bounds, yet



I shall *always* exercise my authority as a husband, when I find you disposed to overlook my wishes and defy my power. See to it!"—and Julia, trembling like an aspen, and conscious that her husband, ever kind and indulgent, was in the right, glided from the library in which this scene had taken place, and going straight to her chamber, turned the key in the door, and burst into a flood of tears.

A few moments only had passed, when she heard a gentle knock, and as she opened the door, Lord Southdown entered, and took both her hands in his own. "Nay, my Julia," he said, "dismiss those tears; I was more harsh than I should have been—I freely own it; but I was troubled about certain matters of business just at that moment, and—"

"Say no more, Frederick," she answered, casting her arms about his neck, "you are forgiven!"

Better for Lord Southdown had he remained in the library; for these two little episodes gave Julia an insight into her husband's disposition, which she did not fail to improve on many subsequent occasions. "When subjected to command," she thought, "he is iron; but, by coaxing, I can make him do anything."

And she was right.

The result of this second interview was that Julia did go down to dinner—albeit there was no one there to admire her—in her diamonds and silver circlet; and, that she *did* pay the intended visit, with Lord Southdown, half ashamed of his weakness, as an attendant cavalier—a repentant husband playing *cicisbeo* to his wife!

The next week they sailed for London, and the Benedicks returned to town. But, oh ! how dull and gloomy seemed the old house now ! With no one—not even Alice—to enliven the dreary solitude of its echoing halls. So calm—so quiet—so intensely sombre !—like a dwelling from which a funeral train had just departed. A wonderful change came over Pryce. Now that the excitement attendant upon his daughter's marriage was at an end, the remembrance of the occurrences of that fatal night on which his ward had disappeared—fatal, because it had convinced him that it was in the power of one fellow-being to crush him at a blow—recurred to him with tenfold violence. He lost, by degrees, all relish for his business—the art of making money no longer occupied his thoughts—his meditations by day were filled with phantoms, wrapped in winding-sheets, with wounds from which the blood profusely flowed—and his dreams by night were of the same ghastly and uncomfortable nature. Stocks kept on rising, and real estate went up, but that did not banish, even in the smallest degree, the terrors which oppressed him. Strange to say, for once in his life, Pryce Benedick found no consolation in his money !

Two weeks after the departure of his daughter, Mr. Benedick returned with his family to Westchester.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## A SEASON IN PARIS.

IF the reader had placed himself about midway upon the public road leading through a fine champagne country from Rouen to Paris, on a certain pleasant morning in August, 185—, he might have been gratified by the sight of a huge, lumbering *diligence*, drawn by four lean, half-starved horses, slowly toiling their way towards an ancient-looking and dilapidated hotel, which opportunely made its appearance at a certain intersection of the highway. The passengers, on this occasion, were less numerous than usual, and had a sleepy, dismal, discontented look—the natural result of poor accommodations and broken slumbers. While the *conducteur* caused the clumsy vehicle to come to a pause, for the purpose of changing horses, the inmates, satisfied that it was fully daylight, began to shake themselves in their seats, re-arrange their disordered attire, and apply themselves to a readjustment of their several positions. One drew a great woollen night-cap from his head, which, thereupon, presented the appearance of an extensive plantation of seaweed, and replaced it by a glazed travelling cap. Another, after several convulsive efforts, emerged from a heap of cloaks, etc., in which he had been entombed throughout

the night; and, staring wildly about him, as if trying to collect his rambling thoughts—which were just then in a small “two pair back” in the *Rue St. Honore*, Paris, with five small children, and a fussy wife—stretched his arms and legs out as far as he could get them at opposite angles, to the inconvenience of his fellow-passengers, and emitted a yawn which reminded you of the crater of Etna. An old maiden lady who had been, in unconscious innocence, reposing with her head in the lap of a red-nosed bachelor, awoke of a sudden, and, with a shriek like the whistle of a child’s penny trumpet, snatched up a bunch of false curls, which had fallen from her grizzly caput, and withdrew to a distance—the flustered bachelor begging “*milles graces*” for not awaking her, and accidentally removing his wig with his night-cap, in the midst of a profusion of bows which he was making, thereby imparting to himself the resemblance of a monkey. The gentleman called for “*eau sucrée*,” another wanted *café* for himself and lady, and a surly, insolent Englishman, who had been drawn within himself, like a turtle, during the entire route, unexpectedly emerged from his shell, and growled forth an order for “*eau de vie, toute suite*, and be d—d to ye!”

Two only of the passengers remain undescribed: these were a lady and gentleman, both very youthful in appearance, who occupied a seat by themselves at the farther end of the diligence. The gentleman was stationed at the right hand of the lady, and leaned moodily against the side of the vehicle, while his companion, on her part, had taken up a similar

position, leaving between them a considerable vacancy, which, however, no one seemed ambitious of filling.

This unsociable couple were my Lord and Lady Southdown, proceeding to Paris, to pass the coming season, after a brief visit in England to those of my lord's relatives and personal acquaintance, who had not fled thither before them. Although so brief a period had elapsed since the date of their marriage, Lord Southdown had discovered, long ere this, that his wife set a far higher value upon his riches and upon the title which, as a consequence, went with them, than upon himself, and had for some time ceased to take any material interest in her proceedings, suffering her to visit such company as she saw fit to honor with her confidence, and to keep whatever hours she pleased—while he, relapsing rapidly into his bachelor habits, began to find renewed pleasures in his horses and hounds, his books, and his old array of sociable companions. He rejoined his favorite club, which he had cut on being married—having, at that time, encouraged an insane idea that he would find sufficient gratification in the society of his wife, to render the dispensing with such luxuries no very painful operation—and was, in point of fact, almost as much a single man as he had been before he took the fatal step by which he had committed himself for life. He occupied apartments separate from those of his amiable and accomplished partner, and sometimes passed days without seeing her—as her hours for taking meals depended altogether upon the time at which she came home on the previous *morning*. Julia, in short, was involving herself in a perfect maelstrom of fashionable dissi-

pations, and going to the utmost limits of extravagance—for she was determined not to be outvied in splendor by any of her aristocratic acquaintances. She had not bestowed sufficient attention upon the details of European society to perceive that there were different classes among the wealthy, as well as among the poor. That, while one of these classes was distinguished only for its frivolity and unbounded license, the other, in quiet but becoming dignity, stood aloof, disdaining ostentation and display, and delighting rather in the treasures of the mind, than in the giddy pleasures which characterized its opposite. This is the true society of cities—the really exclusive circle, where the only passport—far above all considerations of rank and riches—is mental superiority; the only aristocracy, the aristocracy of intellect! Everybody knows how extensive this class has grown to be among us: how all the conversation among *our* great people runs upon subjects which instruct rather than amuse, and how the company of authors, artists, and professional men of every grade, without regard to their means, is eagerly sought after, and, in fact, are the chief ornaments and objects of attraction of their large assemblies. A fuller description is, therefore, needless.

But, *allons!* for the jaded animals have had their places filled by fresh ones, the Englishman-turtle has finished his brandy-and-water, and retreated once more into his shell, and the *conducteur* has signified to the driver that all is ready. Again the vehicle has taken a start, and rumbles along through the same flat landscapes, luxuriant meadows, and fertile wheat-fields—where the laborers are already

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beginning to emulate the sun. The day passes without the occurrence of anything worthy of interest, most of the passengers having books in their hands, and towards nightfall they come in sight of Paris—the wonderful city—which no reader of history can approach without feeling emotion of some description. As for Julia, her heart leaps up into her throat with expectation, and she leans so far out of the vehicle, that one of the passengers, the little Frenchman with the weedy hair, becoming alarmed for her safety, taps *mi lor* on the knees, and in broken English calls his attention to the fact.

“Oh! ’tis of no consequence; she can take care of herself,” rejoins *mi lor*, and immediately returns to dozing, heedless alike of the gorgeous sunset, and of the multitudinous sounds which proclaim that they are nearing Paris.

Oh! what visions thronged into Julia’s mind, when she really found herself, in a private conveyance, rattling over the pavements of the French metropolis! She thought not of the Richelieus and the Condés—the Bonapartes and the Bourbon warriors—the eminent statesmen, famous scholars and peerless soldiers who had aided in imparting to it a name; but, her fancy was full of brilliantly-lighted rooms and splendid conquests, and all that she had read and heard of the gayety and magnificence of this proud capital, came unsolicited to her memory.

Her husband having engaged apartments beforehand at Meurices, they drove immediately to that fashionable establishment, and for several days Lady S. did not venture abroad—being engaged with dress-makers and tradesmen, to the

exclusion of all other matters. Cards were showered upon the newly-wedded couple by families of distinction, who only paused to ascertain whether Julia came of wealthy parents before they decided to receive her, and a few calls subsequently exchanged; while the interim was passed by Lord Southdown at *cafés* and other places of public resort, in the society of intimate friends. He smoked cigars, drank a great deal of wine, played billiards, and often lost large sums at gambling. For a week or so, it is true, when she found sufficient leisure, he played the *chaperon* to his lovely wife, made her "at home" among his acquaintances, took her to see the *Hotel des Invalides*, the Tuileries, the Louvre, the palace of the Bourbons, l'Ecole Militaire, the Cathedral of Notre-Dame (which Julia remembered chiefly through one of Victor Hugo's pleasant fictions), and, in fact, all those celebrated edifices which have become as by-words in the books of modern travellers. But Julia gazed yawningly at all the wonders which met her gaze, and was far more enchanted by her visit to certain elegant clothing and jewelry establishments, to which her husband, with all the patience and good-humor imaginable, next conducted her. He had determined, at any rate, that she should soon get tired of sight-seeing.

Nor was he disappointed. Before she had been in Paris many weeks, Julia had become so accustomed to its ways, that she could now dispense almost altogether with the services of her husband. Occasionally, one of those interesting family scenes, which impart such an agreeable diversity to married life, would occur between them—for Julia could not



brook any interference with her pleasures, and when he chose to be resolute, both having pretty high tempers of their own, they made quite a time of it together.

One evening, however, Lord Southdown came home to his wife with a cloud upon his brow, which made her tremble for the consequences. He said nothing during supper-time; but, as Julia was on the point of leaving the room for the purpose of making her toilet, he laid his hand upon her arm, and begged her attention for a few moments.

"I understand, Lady Southdown," he said, "that tickets have been sent us, inviting our attendance at the grand *bal costume*, to be given one evening next week, by Madame P——. Is it asking too much of you, to request that for this once, you will comply with my earnest—nay, my urgent—desire, and forbear to honor this occasion with your presence?"

"My dear Frederick, you must be crazed!" she rejoined, in amazement. "Not go to Madame P——'s *soirée*? Why, it will be *the* ball of the season, and not to be present at it argues either that one has not been invited, or else that one is too poor to lay out a little money on a showy costume. Ask me something within the bounds of reason—do!"

"It would appear, Lady S., that nothing which I may take it into my head to ask is reasonable, according to your view of things. In this instance, however, I have an insuperable reason—one that concerns my reputation, Julia—for dissuading you from going to Madame P——'s."

"It's useless talking," responded Julia, resolutely; "my

mind's made up, and I am resolved that I won't alter it for anybody!"

"Then, Julia," said Southdown, sternly, and almost fiercely, "as your husband, whom you have sworn to ever honor and obey, and whom you have, thus far, neither loved, honored, *nor* obeyed, I *command* you not to go to Madame P——'s ball!"

"Really, sir, you are getting to be a pleasant companion!" replied Julia, bristling up; "but I am not to be controlled or thwarted after this fashion! I have promised Lady Clavers that I would go to Madame P——'s ball, and go I will!"

She was about flouncing out of the room in a terrible passion, when Southdown caught her by both the arms with an iron grasp, which, all at once, convinced her of her own feebleness, for while 'twas on her she was unable to stir; and, gazing into her face, with a countenance in which a dozen fierce passions seemed contending for the mastery, he exclaimed, in a voice hoarse from excitement:

"Go, then, inconsiderate and heartless woman, and be along with you my parting words: so sure as you *do* vent in despite of my wishes, to this detestable soirée, so sure will you live to rue the step! Mark me! I am not jesting! The honor of our name hangs, Julia, on this single night; and I have laid commands on you, which, disobeyed, cannot fail to bring ruin and eternal misery upon us."

He cast her away from him as he spoke, and, throwing himself at full length upon a sofa, hid his face in his hands, while Julia hurried, trembling, from the room. Once, only,

she paused upon the threshold; and, looking back upon the drooping figure of her husband, half resolved to return to his side, cast her arms about his neck, and confess her error. But the demon, Pride, prevailed, and she hurried on to her own apartment.

Ah! had she but obeyed that single impulse!

Southdown remained for a few minutes sitting in the position in which she had left him—his whole frame quivering with suppressed emotion. At last, raising his face—which resembled that of a demon—he exclaimed furiously: “But he shall not triumph again! It is not yet too late! I may meet him, perchance”—and seizing his hat, dashed like an uncaged lion from the apartment, and out into the street. Lucky that he did not encounter his wife, or, in the blindness of his passion, he would have struck her!

Reaching a certain well-known *café*, that he was in the habit of frequenting, Southdown abruptly entered, and found himself, almost speechless with rage, among a group of fashionably-dressed men; one of whom—a tall, elegant fellow, with a face of almost transparent beauty, and a delicate, black moustache—he singled out, by a phrenzied motion of his hand.

“A moment since,” said he, “I endured from this personage an insult, which I suffered, for the time, to pass unchallenged. I now return for the express purpose of informing the Count de Mireval that I demand, upon the instant, satisfaction for his insolence!”

The count, who had been looking on at a game between

two friends, cast a glance of scorn at the foaming young Englishman, and replied with insulting coolness :

“My good friend forgets—I have made a bet which will compel me to defer the honor of offering myself as a target for his bullets, until a certain interesting occasion shall have passed over. *Then* I am at your disposal, *mi lor* Southdown !”

He therefore touched his hat politely to Southdown, and replaced his cigar. Finding that the Count was resolute, the latter replied : “As you will, sir ; I shall be on nettles until that day has arrived,” and then, bowing slightly to the company, he retired.

It is about five o'clock on the succeeding morning, as Southdown—his hair dishevelled, his countenance ghastly pale, his eyes blood-shot and wandering, and his clothes in the greatest disorder—staggers, in a state of hopeless drunkenness, to his apartments—the victim of a mistaken notion of honor and an extravagant wife !

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE BAL COSTUME, AND ITS RESULTS.

THE residence of Madame P—— was one of the most magnificent in all Paris : the rooms were large and spacious, and there were wings enough connected with the principal building to lift it from its foundation, and transport it wherever the owner might desire—provided they had been the proper sort of wings. She had galleries devoted exclusively to paintings, by the first masters, living as well as dead ; and halls arranged expressly for *soirées musicales* and *tableaux vivants*. A library she also had, but it had not been much troubled since the death of her late husband, who had been a great booksman and antiquarian in his day. His wife, however, inheriting a disposition not very similar to his own, had bestowed his venerated store of relics, including an Egyptian mummy, upon some museum or other, and transformed his formerly desolate dwelling into an abode of mirth and gaiety—not that she “loved *her husband* less, but that she loved *fashion* more !”

Madame P—— was, herself, a pretty, dapper little woman, of not more than thirty-five, who had been tied down during the earlier portions of her life, to a man old enough to be her grandfather, but whose riches had rendered him a “desirable match.” We will not say that she hailed his death as a joyful

event ; but only a few weeks had elapsed before the gloomy edifice—lately dreaded and shunned by everybody, except a select circle of Monsieur P——’s intimate friends, whose discourse was of bones and fossils, and the great mastodon—was filled with workmen, under whose hands it underwent a rapid transmogrification. And it was now one of the gayest, best frequented, and most fashionable dwellings in the metropolis.

Not to be on visiting terms with Madame P——, was not to be one of the fashionable world of which she formed a part, and as it was Lady Southdown’s desire, on all occasions, to vie with, if not to eclipse, her neighbors, it may readily be imagined that to relinquish the honor of being one of Madame P——’s guests would have been, for her, a matter of no small difficulty. After much consideration of the matter, therefore, she concluded that she would attend the ball at all hazards, without letting her husband know anything about it ; for what possible harm—she argued—could there be in such a step ? As for her husband, his excitement when the ball was made the subject of discussion was, she forced herself to believe, assumed for the sake of making an exhibition of his authority, and if he asked her any more questions about it, she could easily satisfy the “dear, good-natured man,” by assuring him that she had abandoned the intention ! Alas ! she little knew her husband. He had mingled sufficiently with the world to know when to credit, and when to distrust ; and all her artifices were too shallow to escape his practised eye. But he said nothing, and calmly awaited the approach of the eventful night.

It came at last; and Julia, who had thrown away an entire day in framing lies for the purpose of blinding her husband as to her true intentions, was delighted to find that he had engaged himself with some friends, and did not approach her during the whole afternoon. She therefore completed her toilet in excellent humor; and, calling her carriage, hastened to keep her appointment with Lady Clavers, under whose protection it had been arranged that she was to go.

On this important occasion, the extensive mansion of Madame de P—— was one blaze of light and glitter. Crowds were assembled without the gate to criticise the costumes of the guests, as they alighted from their different vehicles, and to list to the strains of music which incessantly rose and fell upon the ear. Few, even among the most noble and aristocratic families of Paris, could surpass Mad. P——, in the magnificence and cost of their entertainments, and her visitors were, consequently, the highest in the land.

As she entered the already thronged apartments, and her dazzled eyes took in, at a single view, the gorgeous panorama which suddenly broke upon her enraptured sight, with its profusion of rich and magnificent dresses, and the numerous ornaments, in keeping with the costumes, which had been judiciously interspersed about, for the purpose of adding to the *grand coup d'œil*, her heart for an instant grew faint within her, and the next moment she found herself seized by the hand by Lady Clavers, who was intent upon introducing her to the giver of the entertainment.

Julia found, in Madame P——, a clever, sociable, little

body, whose unassuming manner immediately made her feel at home ; and, through the exertions of this lady, she soon found herself surrounded by a host of men of all ranks, ages, and callings, eagerly aspiring for the honor of her hand.

Before allowing herself to be committed in the dance, however, Julia took the tour of the rooms, in the company of Madame P——, and her friend, Lady Clavers. And truly brilliant was the scene, which, on every side, met her astonished vision—although long practice in the arts of dissimulation had taught her to conceal from others any such vulgar emotions. She, therefore, gazed upon the splendors which surrounded her, with all the *nonchalant* composure of one accustomed to such exhibitions, and so well did she enact the part, that she succeeded in deceiving Lady Clavers herself.

Every description of costumes appeared to have been brought into requisition, for the present occasion. Cardinal Richelieu, in spite of his gray hairs, walked with all the ease and grace of a polished courtier by the side of the heroic Charlotte Corday ; the grave and dignified Charlemagne cracked jokes with the Duchess de la Valiere ; Abelard and Heloise carried on a long flirtation in obscure nooks and corners ; Catherine de Medicis listened to a long dissertation upon modern fashions from the Cardinal de Retz ; Joan of Arc abandoned her ruder calling for a contest of wits with Quasimodo, and Telemachus and Mentor strode silently about, surveying all. England was also represented in her Raleighs, her Elizabeths, her Cœur de Lions, and her Charles Second. Every country under the sun was, in fact, represented



—the fancy of a great many swaying towards the east, in consequence of which there were Sultans and Sultanas, Pachas of three tails, and Pachas of none; and slaves in any abundance. Julia herself went attired as Amy Robsart; and as she wore no mask, her beauty attracted great attention. Never had she witnessed so great a display of jewelry and ornament; the entire riches of the city seemed to be concentrated about her.

Their scrutiny at length was over, and Julia was beginning to think of making selection of somebody as a partner for the first set, when a group approached, among whom Madame P—— seemed to recognize an intimate acquaintance. He was a man seemingly about thirty years of age, whose face and figure seemed eminently calculated to grace a scene of the present character, and rendered him much sought after among the ladies, with whom he was evidently a great favorite—making remarks and taking liberties which in another would not have been tolerated for an instant. Yet, notwithstanding all this, the Count de Mireval—for he it was—had the most unenviable reputation in the world; as a libertine and a gambler, he was notorious; and he had taken the lives of heaven knows how many of his fellow-creatures in duels—for he was, what is generally termed, a dead-shot. Stories were also told which implicated him in certain sinister acts, but to which no one of all his acquaintance would give credence; for the Count de Mireval was very rich, and very handsome; very bold, and very accomplished; and, those very

vices which would have condemned him as a villain and a blackleg, in the judgment of any candidly-disposed person, were tortured into virtues by his friends. By his prowess in duelling he only proved to them his bravery; gambling, in that circle of society of which he was the idol, was only a manly amusement, in which even ladies (heaven save the mark!) sometimes participated; and, as for his affairs with the women, what man that had not been, at some period of his life, concerned in intrigue? Such were the arguments with which the friends of the Count de Mireval sought to gloss over his "little failings."

The Count had chosen the dress of a courtier of the sixteenth century, as being best calculated to set off his pliant figure; and, as he drew near to Madame P——, glittering with gold and jewels, and arrayed in his most fascinating smiles—in the estimation of the bewildered Julia, she had never seen so handsome a man. Mireval was not unconscious of the sensation which he created, and inwardly determined to improve it.

It is almost unnecessary to add that the Count de Mireval was the first—indeed, almost the only one—upon whom Julia bestowed the honor of her hand. Wherever she went throughout the evening, he was always at her side, whispering in her ears those honied words of flattery which are so gratifying to a maiden's vanity. His smile was so inexpressibly sweet, when intended for her—his voice was so low and so musical—his glance so earnest and impassioned, that Julia

felt her heart sometimes throbbing violently beneath her embroidered bodice, and for the time being, almost lost sight of the distressing fact that she was married.

And when, at last, the night had waxed late, and most of the maskers had removed their masks, and there was a lull in the dancing, Mireval, whose spirits seemed never to flag, proposed a series of games, among a select circle of his worshippers, and into which Julia entered with unabated zest—innocent of the peculiar remarks which were going the rounds at her expense. Once, indeed, a low voice whispered her to beware, but she looked upon it as the playful freak of some wittily inclined person, and heeded it not. At last, a game of Mireval's own invention was introduced, in which the individual who may incur a forfeit, was obliged to favor some lady, whom he most fancied, with a kiss; and Mireval was upon the point of claiming this delightful recompense at the lips of the agitated Julia, when a rude hand suddenly thrust her back, and met the Count so closely, that their persons touched, and then recoiled. The intruder was attired as a student of by-gone times, in a dress of unrelieved black; but the mask which had hidden his features being removed, the pale and distorted features of Lord Southdown glared defiance upon one who, he felt, was henceforth to be his rival.

"Monsieur, the Comte de Mireval, has lost his bet!" he exclaimed, sarcastically, and with difficulty repressing his rage. "The kiss with which you boasted you should taint the lips of a virtuous wife has not been bestowed. The forfeit was your Countship's life, and I am come to claim it!"

"*Mi lor* Southdown's jealousy renders him forgetful of the respect due to Madame P——, as his hostess," returned Mireval, pale, but perfectly collected; "at another time and place, we can better discuss the subject."

"The sooner still the better!" was Southdown's reply; and, drawing the arm of his almost fainting wife within his own, he withdrew from the scene of Mireval's discomfiture. A cabriolet was waiting for them at the door; and, at a sign from Southdown the vehicle was driven off in a contrary direction to that which they should have pursued to gain the hotel. Julia, quivering with apprehension, would fain have asked her husband what were his intentions, as she saw that they had emerged from the gloomy streets of the city, and were rapidly leaving Paris behind them; but he sat in one corner of the cabriolet, with his cloak wrapped closely about him, and with such a stern, cold air, that she feared to address him.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## WHAT MARRIAGES IN HIGH LIFE OFTEN COME TO.

It was sunrise, and laborers were proceeding in all directions to the fields to begin their daily labor, while the voices of the peasant girls were already to be heard in the heavily-laden vineyard, before the cabriolet made a pause. Lord Southdown then directed Julia—shivering now from the effects of the morning air, as well as from apprehension—to alight, and his wife found that they had stopped in front of an old chateau, which, from the neglected appearance of everything which met her gaze, was rapidly hastening to decay. An aged, gray-haired domestic appeared at the gate, in answer to their summons; and, after much fumbling with the rusty lock, succeeded in unclosing it to give them admittance.

"Your lordship will find everything in the best of order," said the porter, with a peculiar grin on his shriveled, yellow features; "it's a capital place for a young couple to pass the honey-moon in, is the old chateau—so quiet and retired!"

And the old man rubbed his hands together, like one in whom all vital action has been for years suspended, and emitted an unpleasant chuckle.

"A very appropriate place for a catacomb," Julia thought,

as she surveyed the broken and dilapidated edifice, with its unhinged shutters and disordered casements.

"Many's the youthful pair that have been content to spend their lives here; they became so attached to the place," continued the sneering old man, leading the way towards the chateau.

"Peace, doating fool!" exclaimed Southdown, pettishly, as they ascended the steps, and entered one of the melancholy drawing-rooms, at the further extremity of which a poor apology for a fire was vomiting forth volumes of unhealthy smoke.

"You do not—you do not say, Frederick," ventured Julia, when they were at length left to themselves in this dreary place, "that it is your intention to make this gloomy abode, which seems to have been created expressly for winds to whistle through, and goblins to make merry in, our future house?"

"Your Ladyship," rejoined her husband, coldly, "will be pleased to consider it as such, so long as suits my pleasure to abide in it. A desert," he added, with bitter sarcasm, "should be a paradise to two so lately united and so happily wedded as ourselves."

"And this rigid penance, I am to endure for the fault of another's committing," sobbed Julia, now perfectly humbled, though, alas! too late; "and that other one upon whom, until this fatal ball, I never laid my eyes."

"You may well call it fatal, madam; for fatal it will prove, I sincerely trust, both to your extravagance and your overbearing pride. Ah! Julia, have a care; be warned in time!

The duration of your confinement in this chateau, which I have leased for your purpose, will depend altogether upon your conduct, while in it. Endeavor, therefore, so to shape your actions, that, when we return to the world we may now be considered as having quitted, I may present you to my friends without a blush of shame for your imprudences. For the present, I have saved you—at the risk of my own life, perhaps—from a fate worse than any pangs death can inflict!”

“You are severe beyond the occasion, sir,” she simply answered.

“I am not severe, Julia; I am only just. Did I not warn you of this accursed ball? Did I not tell you in so many words that you would peril my honor by complying with that abominable invitation? And, now, behold the result! I must place my life at the disposal of a gambler, and a libertine, who has insulted me in that point dearest to every man that prizes his reputation beyond the rattling of a box of dice—his wife!”

“I have done wrong,” said Julia, “and I freely acknowledge it; but my errors were of the head rather than of the heart, and why retort upon them thus severely?”

“The confession, Julia, does you credit, though it might have come before; but, as for hearts—an article of which, I fear, you know but little—think, Julia, how bitterly mine has been wrung by you, and how slight will seem the *punishment* which you say I am about inflicting upon you!”

To this the conscience-stricken wife had no reply to make;

and Southdown was relapsing into his usual moody silence, when breakfast was announced; and the doors of the room adjoining being thrown open, a well-laid table was discovered, toward which the young lord conducted his lady. Neither ate much, for the events of the preceding night had taken away the appetites of both; and, as soon as the simple meal was finished, Southdown pulled a bell, which, after some delay, brought an old, wrinkled, woman—wife, as it seemed, to the porter, who had opened the gate to them—tottering to his presence.

“Conduct Lady Southdown to her apartment,” he said, briefly.

“But, my maid, husband—where is my maid?”

“This good woman here,” replied Southdown, “will, hereafter, perform those functions for your ladyship.”

“Ay, ay!” said the crone, showing her toothless gums, while Julia shrank at the absurd idea; “I have played tiring-woman to many a fine lady in my time. I know a thing or two, trust me, though my hand’s a little out of practice, I own!”

The old crone had, by this time, in Julia’s estimation, given ample proof of her capacities as a *tiring*-woman, for tiresome enough she had already proved. The wife looked at her husband’s face, to see if there were no signs of relenting; but, all was gloomy and forbidding there, for Southdown’s eyes were fixed upon the servant.

“You will find little trouble, my good Jeanette,” he said, “in the discharge of your duties; her ladyship’s wardrobe



will be simple in the utmost degree ; and, as for her hair, she will dress that herself. She admires plainness, and detests gew-gaw trappings, such as your modern fine ladies are in the habit of wearing."

Julia winced at these allusions, for she saw that even her wardrobe was to undergo a thorough revision. But she said nothing ; and followed the garrulous old woman through the long, drear entries and resounding corridors to her "room." Here no luxuries met her gaze ; everything, though comfortable, was cruelly plain. The curtains of the bed were of chintz, and not a sign of carpeting adorned the floor. At the door of the apartment, she dismissed Jeanette, telling her that she should not require her services till night ; and, locking herself in, to be secure from intrusion, she gave full vent to her passions—storming, and weeping, and tearing her hair by turns. At length she got tired of this amusement, and betook herself to the examination of a chest of clothes, which lay, with the lid up, where she could not avoid seeing them. They were neat and clean, and of the best material ; but, when Julia came to contrast them with the brilliant robes of Amy Robsart, which she still retained, she became so disgusted, that she threw them violently back into the chest, and resolved to go down to dinner in that costume, rather than submit to what she looked upon as an indignity. A book-case, filled with books, next attracted her attention ; she went to it, in the hope of finding something to divert her mind, but the first volume which she opened was called "*The Obedient Wife*"—so she threw it upon the floor in a rage, and

slammed the door of the book-case with such violence as to shatter several panes of glass. There were some flowers, arranged in boxes, in one of the windows, looking out upon an extensive but neglected garden ; but, as they were not artificial ones, they possessed no charms for the high-bred beauty. Dinner was announced, at last, to her great relief, and she descended, fully determined to give his lordship a piece of her mind ; to her vexation and astonishment, she was told that he had been gone from home all the morning, on urgent business, and would not, probably, be back until night—perhaps, not then. No one being by to observe her actions, Julia made a pretty hearty meal, and then ordered Jeanette's husband to have out the carriage, as she wished to take an airing (her real intention being to return to the city, and consult her friend, Lady Clavers, as to what should be done), but old Jean only shook his head, and replied, with a smile and a shrug :

“ Alas ! your ladyship, we have no carriage here ; and, if we had, I fear it would little avail you, as it was my master's strict order that you were not to stir beyond the threshold—unless, indeed, your ladyship would like to inspect the garden.”

A sickening sensation seized upon her heart ; she merely remarked, “ Is it so ? ” and staggered, rather than walked, back to her room.

“ I am, indeed, a prisoner ! ” she exclaimed, and burst into a flood of bitter, scalding tears.

The next morning Julia met her husband with an humbled,

half-repentant air, and a seeming disposition to be cheerful, which (as she shrewdly calculated), did not fail of producing their effect upon him. She wore one of the dresses with which he had provided her, and which, after all, she found not so unbecoming as she had at first imagined; and, for the first time since their earliest conversation about the ball, he relaxed a little from his usual taciturn demeanor, paid her a compliment about her looks, saying that—

“Beauty when unadorned ’s adorned the most;”

and retailed to her a little scandal, conveying what was passing in town. Any reasonable woman, whose better intellect had not been obscured by a fashionable bringing-up, would have felt grateful for this as a proof of her husband’s returning confidence, and rewarded it accordingly. But Julia had been too well drilled into the course she was pursuing, to appreciate such marks of favor in her lord; and, therefore, although she had played the part she had assumed to admiration, she did not for a moment cease to scheme and plot, with a view of obtaining her release from the uncomfortable *espionnage* by which she was surrounded.

By degrees, strange to say, she began to take an interest in the labyrinthine, wood-grown garden, and half her time was passed in solitary rambles through its lonesome paths. One pleasant afternoon, as the leaves were beginning to fall from the trees, she was surprised, while walking near the high wall, which separated the garden from some neighboring orchards, to see portions of the stone, which was in a very crumbly and

tottering condition, detach themselves from the rest, and come rolling towards her feet. A head immediately appeared above the wall, and, in a few seconds more, Adolphe, Count de Mireval, was at her feet, begging a thousand pardons for his abrupt intrusion.

That night, when Southdown returned from the city, whither he had gone, day after day, in search of Mireval, he found the cage open, and the bird flown!

It is impossible to guess what arguments the Count could have used to persuade her to such a step; but, certain it is that Julia fled with him. Lord Southdown posted instantly to the city, made a few necessary inquiries, and took conveyance for a certain spot, where he was sure of overtaking the guilty couple. For Julia, he did not care; his principal hope was of meeting his deadly enemy, the Count de Mireval; and that his errand was not one of mercy, the case of pistols which he carried with him too plainly testified.

Her flight had been so sudden, and the means of delivery so unexpected, that Julia hardly bestowed a thought upon the step she had taken, until they had reached in safety a little rustic retreat, owned by the Count de Mireval, in the forest of Vincennes. Here he used every effort to disgust her with her husband, and render her enamored of himself. True he had forfeited his word, by bringing her to this lonely spot, instead of conducting her to the city; but, in love as in war, every stratagem is lawful; and, Julia, after all, did not retain her anger long.

It was on the second day after her flight, and she was

seated upon a luxurious divan in one of the contracted parlors of the little villa, playing with the jetty locks of her companion-in-guilt, when a footman made his appearance, and informed the Count that a stranger, habited as a tradesman, wished to have instant conversation with him. Unsuspicious of anything, Mireval followed the man to the gate of the lodge, and found himself confronted by the indignant Lord Southdown.

"So! my brave Count de Mireval," he said, in a tone of bitter taunt; "although your valorous legs have enabled you to escape me thus far, I have, at last, the pleasure of knowing that you cannot further elude me. This cool assumption of superiority will not answer for me, sir; both in wealth and station, I am your superior, and you cannot choose but fight!"

"But, my dear fellow," remonstrated Mireval, who saw that his foe was dreadfully in earnest; "this is neither time nor place, and my weapons are not at hand."

"Do not let that apprehension trouble you," returned Southdown, with ineffable scorn; "I have weapons with me, and a better time and place could not be chosen. Come, sir! you are a dead shot, they say; I would fain try how far your countship's acquirements extend."

"Madman!" exclaimed De Mireval, taking one of the pistols, "if it must be so, follow me to yonder copse. I have no reason for doing you an injury, but—"

Southdown stamped impatiently, and waved him on; and both disappeared within the shade of the adjoining trees. A

moment elapsed, and two shots were heard in rapid succession. Julia, hearing the sounds, instinctively guessed the cause, and hastened, in company with the servants, to the spot—where a scene was revealed which almost froze her blood with horror.

Adolph de Mireval was lying stiff and stark upon the ground, where he had fallen, seemingly without a groan. A few paces from him lay her husband, weltering in his gore, but still alive. The better emotions of Julia's womanly nature were aroused. She remembered Southdown's invariable kindness, and the coldness, the base ingratitude with which she had met all his advances, wrapped in the pursuit of her own selfish pleasures; and she would have knelt beside him, and helped to staunch the blood that was flowing with frightful rapidity from his wounds. But he waved her off, and raised himself with an effort upon his arm; his lips opened, as if in the act to speak, and a faint gurgling sound came from them, in the midst of which, he fell back upon the turf, a ghastly and disfigured corpse!

We pass over the events of a winter, for during that period nothing occurred particularly deserving of mention. Cast off by the relatives of her late husband, as well as by her fashionable *friends* and acquaintances, Julia—restrained by a latent sense of honor, which yet lurked within her, from laying claim to any of the effects or worldly wealth of the deceased—strangely disappeared. For a few weeks, a rumor obtained that she had committed suicide, as a strange woman, whose body had never been found, had been seen, by the patrol, to

cast herself into the Seine, from the parapets of the Pont Neuf, one night, about the date of these occurrences; but, nothing respecting her fate was known, and in a very short time she was totally forgotten in the whirl of fashionable amusements which the season ushered in.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE MAN OF FASHION.

HITHERTO Max Benedick had played a very minor figure in society, and it is probable that he might have continued to sustain the unimportant part nature had assigned him, if a slight accident had not altered the current of the young gentleman's reflections. He was standing before his looking-glass one morning, engaged in the important and, to him, all-absorbing operation of dressing, at exactly eleven o'clock, A. M. (the occasion was of such a nature that he had deemed it worthy of being noted in his diary), when some slight manifestations upon his chin which he had not before observed caused him to take another look. There, in the full light of day, bold and prominent to view, stood three small hairs!

The first thought that Max had ever been guilty of in his life occurred to him then. The successes of his cousin Minns and Major Dabster among the bevy of distinguished beauties who formed the attraction of the drawing-rooms to which he had access, while he remained comparatively unnoticed—"solitary in the midst of thousands"—had often caused him annoyance. The secret now flashed upon his mind, and so vividly, that before the next half-hour had elapsed Max was on his way down town, with an advertisement in his pocket, cut



from that morning's paper, and beginning in flourishing style with some such words as—"Have you used my ointment? No! Then why don't you?" &c. &c.

How assiduously Max cultivated those three hairs! How careful Max was of that magic bottle—the modern "young man's bosom-companion," as it might be called! Never did artist lavish greater pains in the distribution of his colors than Max in the laying out of that precious ointment. In several weeks' time Max's nether face resembled the down-covered skin of a young gosling; a result for which he was indebted solely to nature, but which he, with the infatuation peculiar to numerous youthful representatives of "our first families," persisted in attributing to the hair-persuader.

"Let them resist me now, if they dare!" thought Max, as he surveyed his promising crop shortly after this improvement became manifest.

The little man threw himself energetically into society—he abandoned his old taciturnity and talked to his fair friends with as much perseverance as him of razor-strop notoriety; he dressed himself up until he looked like one of those empty images of manhood which we see on the tailor's clothes stretchers in our daily walks—but all to no purpose. What could his paucity of wealth in the hairy line effect, compared with the magnificent display of Minns, Dabster & Co.? In the words of a new tragedy, a representation of which we were so oblivious as to attend, "despair began to gnaw his very soul," and as he had not an overstock of that article to boast of, despair would have made short work of it, had it not

been for Minns—who volunteered to unriddle the Sphinx for him.

“Hair is all very well in its way,” said Minns, in the course of a serious conversation with Max upon the subject, “but something besides that is necessary to set a man forward in the good graces of the fairer sex. He must exhibit some degree of familiarity with the great world, and affect to think lightly of things that are every day passing within the scope of his own observation, as being infinitely inferior to what he has been accustomed to, and, on that account, beneath his notice. This makes him pass current for something greater than he really is, and imparts to whatever he may say or do a kind of fascination which is not without its weight, I do assure you. I have tried that line of business myself, and I know its value.”

“But, I have never travelled,” said Max, with a desponding shake of the head.

“Neither have I.”

“What? then all your long stories about Prince Esterhazy, and the Marchioness of St. Cloud, and the diamond snuff-box——”

“All sham, my boy: as sham as the jewels on the glittering bauble that I exhibit in commemoration of the event.”

“But, at least,” said Max, “you know as much as if you *had* travelled, while I don’t know anything about what’s going on among the nobility and gentry over the water.”

“You can read, can’t you?” asked Minns, with something like contempt for the little puppy gleaming in his eyes.

"Of course, I can. But I never did—much. That is," and here Max could not help coloring, "I never did."

"More's the pity. But, better late than never. You must immediately undergo a course of reading."

"What shall I read?"

"Anything in the foreign way that you can get hold of."

"I have seen a book called 'Silliman's Travels,' in father's library," said Max. "I suppose that'll do as well as anything else."

"Very good, I dare say: but young ladies are too apt to identify *his* travels with geology, and the antediluvian period; and all that sort of thing. No—you must eschew Silliman, but you may read the Court Circular, if you can get hold of it, and Willis's Travels—they'll put you up to a notion or two about high life; and if you can get hold of a book of the Peerage, you'll lose nothing by it. Never mind solid things, my boy; post yourself up on matters relating to fashion and the opera; and you'll get on faster than you have any idea."

"I'll do it," exclaimed Max, with as much resolution as if he had been on the point of swallowing some nauseous dose.

"I'll do it, let it cost what it will."

"But, reading is not all, either," continued the obliging Minns.

"Not all? What else, for mercy's sake?"

"Who are your acquaintances?"

"Why, 'pon honor, I havn't any, except yourself and the rest of us, and young Soft over the way, and one or two others."

"That's awkward," said Minns; "but even that difficulty may be got over. I know one or two choice fellows, members of some of the first families abroad, who possess wit, intelligence and blood—everything, in fact, except money, and that *we* must find, or there's no getting on at all. They will be able to give you some idea how things are managed on their side of the water, and, for the rest, your own naturally agreeable address and manly bearing will be all that is sufficient to give you the look of a man *blasé* with society."

Max left Minns with a grateful heart (not before that person had made an onslaught upon his purse, however—but that was nothing new), and forthwith set about improving himself in compliance with his cousin's directions.

Before many days had elapsed, Minns had introduced Max among a circle of distinguished acquaintances, who all wore moustaches and somewhat seedy habiliments, and who had a certain cob-webbed sleepy look about the eyes that people of good breeding are mostly supposed to have—over the water. The places frequented by them—usually taverns of questionable character among the purliens of the city—were not, it is true, of a description calculated to give an unprejudiced observer an impression of their aristocratic breeding, and Max was at first inclined to be disgusted with them. But then they talked so largely, and had so much to say about their distinguished families and the annuities that were coming to them, and the expectations that they had, and the ordinary drawbacks that they had not, that Max became speedily enchanted with their society, and was soon on terms of intimate acquaintance with them. The money he lost in their

company at billiards alone would have supported comfortably at least half a dozen poor families. And there were suppers, and boxes at the theatre, and sly games of hazard, horse races, and bets, and what not, so that Max soon found an effectual mode of lightning his purse, if nothing else.

If he grumbled, Minns reminded him that it was the way they did things abroad, and that the ladies liked men all the better for being a little rakish, and Max was satisfied. He was, in short, fairly embarked on the road to ruin.

Very soon, his increased expenditures began to attract the attention of Mr. Benedick himself. Max had long given up all attention to business, and now another cause of uneasiness was to be added to the old man's list of troubles. He felt called upon to remonstrate seriously with Max on the course he was of late pursuing, and the young gentleman, affecting to fall in with his views, promised to amend ; but this was only to throw dust in his father's eyes.

Money, however, must be had, and in this emergency, Max bethought himself of Crawley. To that worthy he accordingly hied, and found in him the ready promoter of all his desires.

Max began to think Crawley, after all, a capital fellow, worthy of filling a more distinguished post in life. Crawley found in Max another means of advancing his own interests, and, in short, not only advanced him money whenever he desired it, but readily undertook to become his purveyor in finding opportunities for the gratification of his sensual tendencies.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## AN INTERVIEW.

EVER since the withdrawal of Lyle from the shelter of his hospitable domicile, Mr. Flint had fallen into a habit of thoughtfulness quite unusual to him, and it was evident that some new crotchet had taken possession of his fancy. Perhaps Flint had taken a sudden notion to reform; or maybe he had fallen in love with Alice, or with Violet, or both. At all events, he had become within the past few weeks quite a different being from the Timothy Flint of former times.

"I say, mother Peg," one morning exclaimed Flint, after an unusual long fit of thoughtfulness, partly superinduced by an unwonted depression in the money market—as far as his individual pocket was concerned—"this state of affairs may be all very well in the abstract, but, in reality, it's no go—I may be mistaken, but that's my opinion."

"Which means," replied the woman, "that you are itching to be engaged in some new deed of darkness. What fresh piece of deviltry is your brain just now hatching, dear Tim?"

"Come, come, mother Peg," he retorted sulkily; "none of your sneering to-night, if you please, or I may take a notion to give that old wizen of your'n a gentle squeeze, by way of reminder. You know what I'm up to well enough, you do—

that old chap that we kept here so long, and the young woman that came after him paid us for keeping—”

“Well, brute, what of him?” she asked, almost fiercely.

“Now, don’t look at a feller so, mother; it ain’t pleasant,” he exclaimed, relaxing into his usual habit of speaking. “You know, as well as I do, that we ain’t rich enough to support folks in idleness, and what’s the use of having kept a chap in board and bed, in this ’ere establishment of our’n, and nobody offering rewards for his recovery, nor nothing of that sort. It’s my private opinion that old feller’s a humbug, mother Peg, and only tumbled into that hole for some sinister purpose. I blush for myself, I do, mother, when I think of the sympathy I’ve wasted upon that venerable impostor.”

“It serves you right,” said mother Peg, chuckling and rubbing her hands together; “it serves you right, and I’m glad of it. You thought you’d make a speculation out of those gray hairs, and nicely you were deceived for your pains—ha! ha!”

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed Mr. Flint, with a sudden burst of mirth, contrasting strangely, it must be confessed, with his lugubrious countenance; “funny, isn’t it? It didn’t occur to me before, but it really is a remarkably good joke—remarkably!” and then Mr. Flint began to bite the ends of his gloves, and thought it lucky for Job that he wasn’t present just then.

“I’ve had dreams to-day,” said the woman, after a slight pause, during which she had been eyeing Flint keenly.

"Now, don't mother," exclaimed the latter, in a remonstrative tone; "I know you're going to say something horrible, and, as it is, I'm afeared to go out o' nights, lest some of those old apple trees should turn into imps of a sudden, and grab me up in their arms, and vanish in a flash o' blue fire, like the chap in the play."

"You're either a very great coward, or a very deep knave," said Peg, viewing him with disgust, not unmingled with suspicion; "but it's not of hobgoblins that I was about to speak—though, no doubt, if I chose to mention names, I could conjure up a demon or two that would put the devil's own imps to the blush for wickedness."

"You alarm me, mother; I think I can smell brimstone, already."

"A sign that your patron saint, the devil, has not deserted his offspring, that's all. But give me your ear, and I'll let you into a secret."

Seeing that she was in earnest, Mr. Flint drew his chair closer to that of the hag, and drawing a dried up bolivar cake from his pocket, he admonished her to "get on with her donkey," and forthwith commenced a furious attack upon the bolivar, by way of fortifying himself against any astounding developments that might ensue.

For more than an hour, the two sat thus over the fire, engaged in earnest conversation, sustained in tones that were intended to guard against eaves-droppers, and it may be readily imagined, that Mr. Flint found something interesting in the communications of the hag, from the fact that, before



he had gotten very deeply into the merits of his bolivar, he had returned it to the cavity whence he had produced it, and given his individual attention to Mother Peg. When she had concluded, her listener remained for some moments absorbed in a deep reverie, and then, suddenly seizing his dilapidated hat and knotty cane, he declared very briskly that he "had got it," and whistling a fragment from "Lovely Rose," he speedily withdrew himself from the premises.

The countenance of the wretched woman brightened suddenly, as Flint turned away from the door. There was something triumphant in the look that came over her, and perhaps there was cause for it. Years of privation, and suffering, and sorrowing were at length to be atoned for.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## CLOUDS IN THE HORIZON.

SUMMER was rapidly merging into golden autumn, and still affairs preserved their wonted tranquillity at Knickerbocker Cottage. Herbert was making rapid progress in his studies—insomuch that there was a prospect of his soon entering upon the practice of the Law—always provided, as Mr. Humphreys judiciously insinuated, that the requisite number of clients was forthcoming. Herbert, too, had pursued his studies the more diligently because there was a possibility that through them he should one day be enabled to repay the kind-hearted old bachelor for all the favors which the latter had so profusely lavished upon him. From the intensity with which he applied himself, it may be imagined that he had little leisure to devote to the cottage and its inmates, but what time he could contrive to pass with them he considered the pleasantest moments of his life. Mr. Humphreys' frequent cautions with regard to the allurements and gilded hypocrisies of city life, prevented his contracting any acquaintance that could exercise an injurious effect upon his advancement, and there was thus no obstacle to impede his success.

It would have been a difficult task, however, at this stage

of affairs, to persuade Herbert that his protector's view of matters and things in general was a correct one, for he was yet extremely young, and utterly unskilled in the ways of the great world. His heart was in its pure and uncontaminated state—it had not as yet made its chrysalis—and, like most young people who have known no trouble, he believed everything to be veritable gold that possessed its glitter. Happy for him that it was so!

As for Violet, she was the life and soul of Knickerbocker Cottage, and already the kind housekeeper, Mrs. Marston, had come to look upon her as a daughter. There was but one cloud on the horizon of her young existence, and, under the brightening sun of Hope, that was fast being dispelled. The protracted illness of her father gave Violet much uneasiness, but her anxiety was somewhat lightened by the knowledge that he was as well taken care of as he could have been under Mr. Humphreys' roof. She frequently visited him, to regale him on little delicacies made under her own supervision, and to carry to him encouraging accounts of her progress at the Cottage.

Under Mrs. Marston's tuition, Violet had improved in all respects, and the force of her natural accomplishments as well as the gentle amiability of her manner and decided personal graces, acquired her quite a notoriety among the circle of Mr. Humphreys' acquaintance. Among these was the good Mrs. Arthur, whose exertions in the performance of her duties as a directress of the Mission had been in a great measure the means of raising Violet to her present position.

But a circumstance occurs which, for the time being, throws a shadow over the picture.

A strapping, round-shouldered daughter of the Emerald Isle, Biddy Macartney by name, was engaged one morning in mopping the porch in front of Mr. Humphreys' door, when her attention was attracted by a whistle, and, on looking round, she perceived a tall, ill-dressed fellow, standing without the iron gate, which happened at the moment to be locked. Biddy did not like the stranger's physiognomy, for he was not near so prepossessing in his appearance as the butcher and the baker, and it was, therefore, in no very gentle terms that she asked him what he wanted?

"What do I want?" replied the interloper, who was no other than Flint. "I want my dog, that's what I want. Here, Growl! come here, sir!" and he immediately recommenced whistling with more vigor than ever.

"May the devil fly away wid your dog, that comes here to make such a hullabaloo at this time o' the day!" exclaimed Biddy.

"May the devil seize your iron gate, that let him in and keeps me waiting, when I should be at Harlem," rejoined Flint, in his ugliest manner. "Come, you Amazon—either drive him out, or open the gate and let me fetch him."

"Let *you* in, indeed, or the likes of you! Maybe it's the spoons ye're after."

"Take care, my good girl. Such terms are actionable," said Flint, recording a memorandum, apparently, but, in reality, making a diagram of the grounds.

"Now, you needn't be comin' after *me* wid your big

words," exclaimed Biddy, with a menacing shake of the mop, "My masther's a bit of a laayer himself, and we won't stand no blarneyin' here! So get along wid yer donkey!"

"Make it 'dog,' and I'll go," replied Flint, coolly.

"Musha! the man won't be satisfied, thin," said Biddy, crossly. "Here, ye thief of the world!—where are ye?"

At this moment the object of her dislike appeared at the end of one of the garden walks with the remains of a young chicken, on which he appeared to be regaling himself with immense satisfaction, in his mouth.

"As I live!" almost shrieked Biddy, "if he ain't been in the hen roost already! Is that the way ye do it?" and the irate girl made a dash at the dog with her mop, but was glad the next moment to retreat beyond his reach—not relishing the formidable battery of teeth displayed by Growl.

"Take care how you go," said Flint, "if you don't want to be made mince meat of. He has a peculiar relish for Irish mutton, particularly when it comes from——. What's the name of your county?"

"*Do* take him away, now," urged Biddy—"that's a good fellow!"

"I would, if he'd only come, but you see, being newly bought—perhaps you'd fetch him to me."

"Me! is it afther sharin' the fate of the chick that I'd be?"

"Then, open the gate and I'll take him, if I can once *get* this collar round his neck—and it's no joke to do that, I can tell you!"

"Well, thin, come in and take him. Sure I can't stand here all the mornin' talking wi'd ye's."

So Biddy unfastened the gate, and Flint found himself within the enchanted domain.

"Nice place, this here," he said, as he busied himself in fastening the collar on his runaway.

"Faix it is," answered Biddy. "There's plenty to eat here, and little to do at that."

"And nice people, too, I daresay, if we may take yourself as a specimen."

Flint had her there. Biddy might have had a heart as unimpressible as a Dutch cheese, but it couldn't resist the blarney. In a few moments, she was as intimate with Flint as though she had been brought up with him, and the latter had elicited all the information about the inmates of Knickerbocker Cottage that he had desired, and more into the bargain. He knew how many there were in the house—what it was furnished with—and what was the quantity of plate that was used at meals: in short, all about the place and Biddy herself, including a history of the Macartney family; and Biddy—bad cess to the blarney!—invited him to dinner in the kitchen!

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## THE MIDNIGHT CONFERENCE.

AFTER leaving the hospitable dwelling where Violet was so pleasantly passing her time, in happy unconsciousness of the fresh troubles that were in store for her, Mr. Timothy Flint was walking rapidly in the direction of the road to Fordham, where he intended to take the cars for the city, and where he arrived in such thoughtfulness of mind that he came very near being run over by the locomotive, which was just then approaching.

"I don't know what old Peg has got in her eye," he ruminated, "and I don't care. Something to her own advantage, of course, and not probable that it's anything to mine. But, if I can, by a master-stroke of manœuvering, turn up something out of my visit to forward the interests in particular of T. Flint, Esquire, Mother Peg's views may not be interfered with, and the circumstances of the aforesaid altered considerably for the better."

On arriving in the city, Flint took his way towards a certain quarter once the abiding-place of the more wealthy townsmen, but latterly given over to a mixed population whose circumstances and pursuits are as varied as the tenements which go to make up the neighborhood. Some of

these tenements, having been built for the dwellings of people in more than easy circumstances, still wear an imposing look through the dust and decay which have settled upon them, and exhibit in their faded curtains and obsolete ornaments an air of tawdry ostentation ; others have become so shabby and out of order that their owners seem to have come to the conclusion that they are not worth repairing, and are let out to lodgers and tenants of every description—whose tenure of their dirty abodes appears to be growing weaker and weaker, as the spirit of improvement begins to carry its encroachments in that direction. Those narrow and tortuous streets, where the mud lies in heaps higher than the side-walk, and the unsightly buildings that preside over those festering mounds of corruption will soon have to yield before the money-getting spirit of the age ; and broad, well-regulated thoroughfares and stately warehouses will ere long occupy their site.

In a well-furnished though somewhat faded apartment of one of the best of these dilapidated mansions, at the hour of nine in the evening, on the day of Mr. Flint's adventure at Knickerbocker Cottage, was seated an individual who must hereafter bear a more conspicuous part in our story.

This person reclines in an easy chair by the side of a table covered with books and papers, the contents of which appear to consist principally of figures. He is clad in a handsome dressing-gown, and at the moment of his introduction to the reader is enveloped in a cloud of smoke, emitted from a meerschaum pipe which he has just lighted. If Herbert had been there, he would have had some difficulty in recognising



this person as Mr. Crawley. Chiefly owing to the fact that the latter had grown a tremendous beard, which contrasted unnaturally with that person's long-drawn countenance and sharp features.

As Mr. Crawley sat thus at his luxurious ease, with the remains of a dish of tea unfinished at his elbow, a door all at once opened, and Flint made his appearance—so abruptly that the skirt of a lady's garment, as it vanished into an opposite passage, did not escape his attention.

"Beg pardon, boss," said Flint—"I thought you was alone."

"So I *am* alone," replied Crawley, tartly; "but that's no reason why you should not observe some ceremony—walking into a man's house as if there were no doors to knock at."

"Come, boss, none of that," said Flint, coolly seating himself on the table, close to Crawley. "After all the adventures we've had in common, that sort of thing won't do for me."

"You are an amiable acquaintance at any rate," muttered Crawley. "Pray, what sort of thing *will* do for you, may I ask?"

"Well, I don't know, exactly. In fact, I haven't quite made up my mind, except to one thing. Money must come from somewhere, or I shall have to turn my attention to the financial line, as the only respectable means of getting a living."

"That's as much as to say that your present rewards are not to your liking."

"Just so! and, in fact, that's the occasion of my being here to-night."

"I'm short," replied Crawley, dryly.

"Visitors this evening?" asked Flint, looking round him quite at his ease.

"No—nobody. Merely my washerwoman."

"Do washerwomen indulge in such things as these?" asked Flint, holding up a valuable fan, which he had found lying on the table.

Crawley returned the cunning look of his questioner with a blank stare at his audacity.

"I should like to know," said Crawley, "what concern it is of yours, *who* visits me?"

"It's nothing to me, of course," returned Flint. "I was only thinking how the polite world would stare if they got an idea, by accident, of the way in which one of their number passes his time—that's all!"

"Why, you don't mean——"

"I don't say *I'd* be the one to tell on you; but these little things will leak out, you know, boss, and the result aint always so very agreeable as we might wish."

"In plain terms, if I don't give you some money, you'll expose my private affairs to the world—is that it?"

"That's it, boss. Disguise aint in my nature."

"Well, you shall be satisfied. But leave me now, I beg of you; I have some business on hand to-night, and your being about will only disturb me. Come to me to-morrow night, and you shall have money."

"Beg pardon, but there's one other point I should like to touch on."

"Anything you please, but not now."

"Gal in the case?" said Flint, laconically.

"How does that interest me?" asked Crawley, pretending indifference, but really wide awake.

"Oh! you're a sharp one," said Flint, much amused. "Why, I'll tell you how it interests you. Don't I know how you've been weaving your meshes round that innocent little fly, Max Benedick, and how you're getting hold of all his loose dimes by humoring of his whims, and picking up all the nice things for him that fall in your way outside o' business? And didn't you tell me to look bright when I heard of a gal of the name of ——"

"That's quite enough. Leave out the name."

"O, no, we never mention 'em," replied Flint; "but the long and short of it is, she's found, name or no name."

"Found, do you say?"

"Yes—I found her."

"If this be so," said Crawley, "Flint, my boy, your fortune is made!"

"That's what I observed to myself, when I made the discovery," said Flint. "Says I—Flint, my boy, says I——"

"Well, never mind what you said; we'll hear that another time. In the meanwhile, here's some money for you, and beware how you let any one else into your confidence. Not that *I* care, particularly," said Crawley, "but——"

"I understand. I'm tight as a bank-lock. Hobbs couldn't pick *me*."

These two worthies, whose ostensible positions in society

were so totally different, and yet in whose characters there was such a similarity as to render them worthy confreres in any scheme of villany, then went into a long and earnest conversation, which must have been of interest to both, judging from Flint's excited manner, and Crawley's rapt attention.

It was midnight before Flint departed. When he was finally left to himself, Crawley relapsed into a revery, in which Violet and Max Benedick played no inconspicuous part. What was the result of his rumination, we shall know anon.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## THE SPIDER WEAVING HIS WEB.

SINCE the night of the interview with Flint, Crawley had had his hands full of business, and, it may be added, his head full of schemes. The grand aim in life of Mr. Crawley was, apparently, on the point of being accomplished, and his countenance was beginning of late to wear an air of exhilaration quite unusual to it. Already in his imagination he saw himself the successor to the large business of Benedick & Co., for he had done much, in his own modest way, to destroy in Max every mite of business capacity he had ever possessed, and rumor was beginning to spread the fact that the Benedicks were living beyond their income, and, especially among those who would fain be their rivals, but could not afford it, their speedy downfall was predicted. Now, the motive for all the cringing and fawning which had made itself so conspicuous in Crawley's character, and had gained almost the entire control of Mr. Benedick's business, began to be manifest. He had played a shrewd game, and flattered himself that he was on the point of coming out winner. With this end in view, he had humored all Max's whims and caprices, had advanced him money on all occasions when he thought it safe to do so, and had made himself, in fact, that young gentleman's pur-

veyor in all the luxuries and dissipations which go to make up the necessities of the modern fashionable "gent."

One morning, as Violet was tending her flowers in the garden attached to Mr. Humphreys' dwelling, a stage drew up at the end of the little lane leading to the house, and deposited a personage whose clothes as well as his whiskers had suffered somewhat from the dust of the road. While Violet was wondering who the stranger could be, the latter had entered the gate, and was advancing to meet her with a profusion of bows and a display of politeness which gave the young lady an irrepressible inclination to laugh, but which Mr. Crawley (for he it was) supposed to render him attractive in the highest degree.

He carried a carpet-bag in his hand, and looked as if he had merely dropped in for a call, while proceeding to some place still further on.

It may here be remarked that, although he had only once seen Violet, and that as an infant, on one of the few occasions when he visited the home of the Lyles on Benedick's business, although he had more than once heard her story mentioned, among the Benedicks, in connection with cousin Alice, in terms intended to cast a reproach upon the latter, but in reality making the transaction seem more to her credit; and Flint—having, as we have noticed, by ingratiating himself with Biddy, the maid, succeeded in possessing himself of every circumstance in Violet's history not known to Crawley—the latter was sufficiently fortified—at least he thought so—to enter upon the hazardous game he was about to play.

“Good morning, Miss,” said Crawley, with his usual blandness; “I have the honor, I presume, of addressing Miss Violet Lyle?”

Miss Lyle signified by a distant inclination of the head and a pretty smile that he was not mistaken.

“I thought so,” continued Crawley, throwing a good deal of respectful admiration into his manner. “Family likenesses rarely mislead one. How like her mother!”

“Did you know her then, sir?” asked Violet, with a sudden interest in the stranger.

“Only too well, Miss,” replied Crawley, with a mournful shake of the head. “She was an angel of virtue, that woman, but in compliment to the time and place I forbear to speak further of her. Only, you are very like her, Miss. And your respected father—is he recovered yet?”

“Heaven grant that he *may* recover,” said Violet, sadly; “but I fear he never will. Ah! sir, you do not know all we—that is, *he* has suffered.”

“I have heard of it, Miss, but recently, for the first time. Although not an intimate friend of the family, I had the honor of knowing and esteeming your father in better times, and in a better place than this, and it was for the purpose of inquiring into his affairs, and, if possible, testifying my sympathy with him in his misfortunes, that I am here at this moment—for I could not pass this place, knowing that you were in it, without paying you at least that compliment.”

“An acquaintance with our family in its better days, however slight, must always render you a welcome visitant here,”

replied Violet, warmly. "But pray come in, sir; you are tired and covered with dust, and must need refreshment."

"If it would not be considered an intrusion, Miss, nothing would give me greater pleasure."

"It is a favor, sir, that I beg you will grant us; and here," she added suddenly, with a brighter smile, "comes one that will second my request even more warmly."

The last exclamation had been called forth by the appearance of Herbert at the bottom of the walk. Without troubling himself to unlatch the gate, he leaped the low paling as light as a feather, and was approaching Violet, merrily singing a catch from some familiar song, when, for the first time noticing the visitor, who had been concealed from him by a bush, he recoiled in something like consternation.

"Crawley!"

"Your servant, Mr. Herbert—what a fine day we have," said the sycophant, smoothly saluting Herbert—a careless smile on his countenance, but the blackness of night in his heart.

"Why, what the deuce are *you* doing here?" asked Herbert, in a manner anything but complimentary to Crawley.

"Why, Herbert, how you behave," interposed Violet; "this is an old friend of our family, come to inquire into the condition of my poor father. I have invited him to take some refreshment, and I hope that, for *my* sake, you will second the invitation."

"Thank you, Miss—thank you," said Crawley, bowing meekly; "it is so like your mother. Come, Mr. Herbert," he



continued, extending his hand to the young student, "let us bury the hatchet. I know you don't feel altogether at home with me, on account of the loss of your place and the strictness with which I enforced our employer's orders—things, of course, with which I had nothing to do, any further than the mere performance of my duty—but that is all past and gone. Come—shall we be friends again? What say you?"

"Yes," said Violet, coaxingly, "forgive and forget, Herbert,—won't you?" and she laid her hand on his arm and looked up into his face so winningly that—in fact, Herbert might have resisted Crawley, but he could not resist Violet, so the consequence was that all adjourned to the house, where, with Mr. Humphreys and Marston, they made quite a party.

Crawley remained at the cottage for more than an hour, during which time he exerted himself so successfully to strengthen the good impression he had created in his own favor, that, before he left, the family were showering their invitations upon him, and even Herbert exhibited some cordiality. A grim smile spread itself over his features as he left the cottage. Triumph sat enthroned in every lineament.

"I will win the game," he soliloquized, "but not for my friend Max. Having once got himself into comfortable quarters, Theophilus Crawley is not the man to surrender the advantages gained at so much risk to another."

But Herbert—

"Pshaw! What of him—he's but a stripling, hardly yet out of his swaddling clothes," thought Crawley. "*He's* easily got rid of!"

Thus ruminating the schemer made his way back to town—his pretence of having business in the neighborhood being, of course, a sham. On many succeeding occasions during the year Crawley visited the hospitable domicile of Mr. Humphreys—until, becoming emboldened by what he conceived to be his success, he resolved to acquaint Violet with the passion which possessed him. Max's importunities he had found no difficulty in evading, and everything seemed to conspire to promote his wishes.

Finding Violet one day alone in the library, Mr. Crawley astounded her ears with a sudden declaration of love. They had been scrutinizing prints, and looking into albums, and Violet had been playing some favorite airs on the piano for his amusement, without the slightest idea that his feelings were other than those of a friend, when this development took place. Before she could prevent it, he had dropped on his knees and taken one of her hands in his own—covering it with kisses.

"Sweet Miss Violet," he exclaimed, with a touch of genuine passion in his voice and looks—"I know that I possess your heart. Only say that your hand shall be mine, and I am the happiest man in existence!"

"As the friend of my father," returned Violet, when she had in some measure recovered from the agitation into which this speech had thrown her—"as the friend of our family I shall always have a kind regard—a—a sort of reverence for you—but more than that is impossible."

"Your words are daggers to me!" said Crawley, theatrically. "Can it be that you love another?"

"I cannot answer you, sir. Pray release my hand!"

"Not until you have given me some cause, however slight, for hope."

"Is Mr. Crawley so ungallant as to refuse the request of a lady?" said a voice close at hand.

Crawley turned and beheld Herbert—much to his chagrin.

"We were only enacting a little scene together," said Crawley, with forced gayety, and a peculiar glance at Violet—which was lost upon her, for her eyes were fixed on Herbert's, to whose side she had fled. "An innocent way enough of killing time. Really, Miss Lyle, you are a loss to the stage—you are. But I must be going, or I shall find the deuce to pay at the counting-house. Good morning, Mr. Herbert; good morning, Miss Violet. What a delightful day this is, I declare!"

And he sauntered down the path and out at the gate precisely as if he had not heard the loud burst of merriment which greeted his departure from the little parlor in which the foregoing incident had occurred.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## THE DINER-OUT AT HOME.

It was a miserable garret, abounding in great cobwebs, and hordes of huge brown bugs, which sprawled and crackled in every nook and corner of the vacant, dreary place: the time about six in the evening. The place was not exactly vacant, either, inasmuch as there was a small rickety imitation of a four-post bedstead in one corner of it, with a few sheets spread across it as an apology for a bed; while, upon a line which stretched from one end of the aforesaid posts to some remote portion of the garret, invisible in the darkness beyond, hung an article commonly known as a "dickey"—more properly denominated a *false bosom*; one pair of white silk stockings, pretty well darned; a silk neckerchief, of precisely sixteen different colors; a white ditto, evidently reserved for gala occasions (though what the inhabitant of a den like this could have to do with anything approximating to enjoyment, was a mystery to the uninitiated); a small cane; and a handkerchief, so deeply impregnated with musk, that the atmosphere of the place was more intolerable than that of sixty opera boxes crowded into one. A common wood partition seemed to divide this gloomy abode from another just like it, and against it was placed a table on three legs, and

above that again a small triangular piece of looking-glass—the only article visible in the shape of a mirror. The owner, it would seem, had a taste for the fine arts, although his finances compelled him to limit that taste to a single colored print—the United States Mail Steamer High-binder, taking in a supply of water (contrary, however, to wishes and consent of the passengers and captain).

A small stove, which was so full of fissures that it seemed with difficulty to hold itself together, was emitting an unaccountable quantity of smoke at about an equal distance from the table and the bed, and over this stove sat a solitary individual, in his shirtsleeves, with a piece of paper spread across his lap, diligently engaged in an endeavor to solve the vexed question, whether a pair of boots could be made to receive a polish without the aid of blacking.

Could the ferocious Major Dabster, U.S.A., and that amiable young individual, Mr. Frank Minns, have stepped into that garret, at that identical moment, and looked in the face of the solitary individual with whom we have been striving to render the reader familiar, they would have sworn that it was no other than Mr. Pinkerton Podge, who sat before them, engaged in the investigation of the aforementioned problem. Alas! for poor human nature!—the truth must be spoken; Pinkerton Podge was *at home*! Let not the reader imagine that any untoward circumstance had thus suddenly plunged Mr. Podge from the height of luxury, down to the deepest depths of wretchedness. No—such had been for years the situation of that unfortunate gentleman's affairs; but, by a

tact which all, happily for society, do not possess in an equal degree, Mr. Podge had so contrived to conceal his true condition, that he managed to preserve, unchanged, the *entrée* to many of the most exclusive dwellings in the city, and to sponge many a sumptuous dinner and many an extraneous "V" from those young sprigs of fashion with whom it was his delight, or, more properly speaking, his policy, to associate.

As Mr. Podge was thus remarkably occupied, while he lightened the toilsomeness of his labor, by humming to himself, "I'd be a butterfly"—the mellifluous tones of a fiddle were heard to arise gradually from the other side of the boards; whereat, Mr. Podge became so disgusted that he fired his blacking brush at the partition which concealed from him the object of his ire, and immediately followed it up with the boot.

"Confound that fellow!" he growled, almost beside himself, at the sudden interruption of his meditations; "he's always playing Hail Columbia—and *such* playing, too! I say, Number one! *can't* you be quiet there for a little while!"

"What am I doing of?" replied a deep low voice, evidently that of the owner of the fiddle, from the other side of the partition.

"What are you doing?" rejoined Mr. Podge; "driving a fellow-creature crazy—that's what you're doing?"

"You don't like my music, then?" asked the voice.

"Oh! if you only knew how I *dislike* it," rejoined Mr. Podge, supposing that he was about to comply with his request.

But immediately, as if the owner had resolved to give his neighbor a dose, the instrument struck up again—and Podge was obliged to endure all the tortures of

“Hail Columbia, happy land!”

until he was impelled to rush to the bedstead, and bury his head in the blankets, to shut out the horrid din.

“Got enough of it?” at length asked the voice, pausing for a moment, on finding all quiet “next door.”

“Oh! no—it’s delightful—pray, go on,” answered Podge, fearful that, if he objected, the fiddle would re-commence, never to stop.

Here, a bright idea seemed to strike the individual addressed as “Number One.”

“I say, Number Two!”

“Well,” said Podge; “you needn’t bawl quite so loud; I’m not deaf.”

“I’ve got a proposal to make.”

“Make it, then,” returned Podge, gravely.

“You and I have been neighbors in this Parnassian retreat for several months—ain’t we, Number Two?”

“You are kind enough to say so,” answered Podge, who was just in the humor to read “Fox’s Book of Martyrs.”

“And, during all that time, we’ve scarcely interchanged a civil word betwixt us,” proceeded the stranger.

“All owing to that devilish fiddle,” retorted Podge, in strange forgetfulness of what had just occurred. In revenge, Number One instantaneously recommenced playing; a cir-

cumstance which immediately brought back to Mr. Podge's mind the sufferings he had recently endured. His heart, which had been opening by degrees towards the unknown, suddenly shut up, like an oyster.

"You were about to make an observation," he remarked, in the hope of calling off his neighbor's attention.

"Only going to propose," returned the other, "that there should be a cessation of hostilities between us, for the present; and that, as you appear to have made up your mind to stay at home this evening, we club our resources together, and make a night of it."

"My dear sir," said Podge, "if you only knew the limited nature of my resources, you would not have the slightest desire to cultivate my acquaintance."

"And if you only knew the extent of *mine*, you'd be devilish glad of the opportunity," rejoined the other.

"Your proposition is a fair one. But, will you allow me, before I consent to enter into the arrangement, to exact from you a single promise?"

"With all my heart, my boy! What is it?"

"That you—that you will not return to your fiddle for the remainder of the evening."

"What—sign away my liberty? My dear boy, I couldn't think of it! It's the only enjoyment I have!"

"Promise me, at least, that you will not play Hail Columbia. My nerves are so *very* weak," said Podge, apologetically.

"It shall be as you wish. I will *not* perform Hail Colum-



bia, whatever else I may take it into my head to do. So bring in *your* 'resources,' my boy, and I'll produce mine."

In a few moments, Podgè appeared at the door of Number One, with his arms full of "resources," which he proceeded to lay upon his fellow lodger's table—an empty barrel, with an old door laid across it, the whole neatly covered with a sheet, freshly aired. Having disencumbered himself of a plate of red herrings, a loaf of fresh bread, a pot of warm tea, which he had just taken from his stove, and sundry other luxuries of a similar nature, Mr. Podgè then looked up at his fellow lodger, and finding him to be a not ill-looking fellow—although his clothes, it is true, were somewhat the worse for wear—he advanced, and shook him by the hand.

"How d'ye do, Number One?"

"Very well, Two! How are you?"

"Miserable, I thank you!"

"Glad to hear it, my boy! So am I. It's a villainous world, sir, is this!"

"Very!" replied Podgè, seating himself, as he perceived that the other did the same. "But where's *your* 'resources!' "

"Oh! never mind mine, my dear boy! There's plenty here for both of us!" returned Flint (it was, indeed, that omnipresent personage), with the most nonchalant air imaginable.

"Yes—but—"

Mr. Flint glanced towards the "table," and Mr. Podgè

could not help perceiving that his neighbor had "come it over him."

Having by this time become a little more intimate with his neighbor, Mr. Podge ventured to make an inspection of the premises, and found that, in point of comfort, Flint's apartment was far superior to his own; for the latter had an eye for the picturesque, and objects of every description were hung about the place, while a regiment of newspapers, plastered overhead, concealed the beams and rafters, and imparted to the place a less desolate appearance than that which was observable about his own. A pair of rusty foils, boxing gloves, a few colored engravings, illustrating the triumphs of the turf, a whip, a dog collar and chain, were among the various objects which hung from the partition; while, directly over the head of Mr. Flint's cot, was suspended a huge blunderbuss—which that gentleman had placed there to have ready for immediate use, in case of anybody attempting to rob him.

Since his last encounter with the reader, the fortunes of Mr. Flint had undergone a variety of changes. Growing tired of the dullness of his life at the hovel (indeed, that place had been getting, for some time, too hot to hold him), he had turned his attention to speculating in a small way; but finding this to be a rather hazardous method of getting a living (because, as he said, he had nothing to speculate on, and if he ventured to borrow a handkerchief, or any such trifle, he was sure to be overhauled for it, and his motives misinterpreted),

he abandoned it, and found employment as bar-keeper at a famous "ken," well known to the "fancy" of that classic region in the neighborhood of the Tombs. Here, however, he drank so much himself, that there was no liquor left, half the time, wherewith to serve the customers; and Flint, in consequence, lost his place. He next earned a miserable pittance by standing outside the counter of one of the notorious Peter Funk establishments of Chatham row, and having soon gained an insight into the business, he set up for himself—the only capital required being a few cases of knives, some tin watches, a lot of empty boxes, and an unlimited supply of *brass*. For the rest he depended upon the generosity of Crawley, who frequently employed him in the manner already noticed.

In his personal attire, Flint had also undergone a considerable transmogrification. The same pantaloons, it is true, were still there which he had worn on former occasions; but, in other respects he was even more flashily, though quite as seedily dressed; and a blue body-coat, with bright brass buttons, on which Mr. Flint bestowed much labor every morning, although a small hole was beginning to be visible at the elbows, and it was somewhat too short in the sleeves, and too narrow across the back, was, in that gentleman's estimation, "just the thing."

"It's a villainous world, I repeat it!" said Mr. Flint, after watching for some minutes the countenance of his neighbor; who was engaged, as we have said, in taking an observation of the premises.

"Yes," replied Podge, severely; and with a marked allu-

sion to the brilliant exploit just performed by Flint—who, the reader will by this time understand, while Mr. Podge had been investigating the aforesaid vexed question with regard to his boots, had been engaged in the investigation of another equally vexing under the circumstances, and quite as important, namely: “How should he contrive to get a supper?” for Flint was very hungry, and he had been for nearly one whole week, a victim to a certain scientific experiment, suggested, strange to say, by a clown at a popular circus—which experiment consisted in eating a handful of dried apples for breakfast, taking a drink (at a pump) for dinner, and letting the aforesaid apples *swell for supper!*—a state of affairs which Mr. Flint found inadequate to the support of life, under the circumstances.

“Yes,” replied Podge, withdrawing his attention from the walls, to fix it upon his “entertainer,” who had already devoured half a loaf of bread, three red herrings, half a dozen onions, and had nearly drained the tea-kettle of its contents, “it is a villainous world! Nothing but humbug and roguery in it!” and then Mr. Podge emitted an unearthly chuckle, at his own cleverness.

“Which should admonish us, my friend,” said Mr. Flint, “to be very cautious in our actions. The greater portion of human beings are so many eager fishermen, and the gudgeons are the green ones, who are so easily taken in!”

Mr. Podge winced, as if somebody had “fetched him one,” and concluded not to try satire again—at all events, for that evening.

"You appear to have met with reverses," said Podge, after a brief pause—during which the noise made by Mr. Flint's gurgling and crunching was frightful to hear, reminding you very forcibly of a hippopotamus treading on a heap of withered branches.

"Did you ever cross to Brooklyn?" asked Mr. Flint suddenly.

"Often," rejoined Podge, unable to see what that had to do with his question.

"And watch the actions of the steam-engine, when you had nothing else to do?" continued Flint.

"Oh! yes—a favorite amusement of mine," answered Podge, who had no more idea of what a steam-engine was like, than he had of what was going on in the moon at that particular moment.

"You may have observed on such occasions," proceeded the other, "that that steam-engine was very frequently reversed, in order to prevent a collision with other craft moving on the river. Now, sir, I'll be so frank as to say—and I think I shall not peril my character for veracity in saying it—that I have met with quite as many reverses, on an average, as that steam-engine. It's a bold assertion, I admit; nevertheless it's true. Yet here I am, you see, sound, wind and gristle!"

Mr. Podge saw that he was *there*, and in that fact he found the most potent voucher for the truth of what his companion had been saying.

"You appear to bear your misfortunes remarkably well, though," he said.

"Um—yes," answered Mr. Flint, as if weighing the question; "but, I'm a philosopher in these matters, and I always manage, somehow or other, to come off with safe limbs after a tustle with misfortune; though it's a villainous world, sir, to make the best of it."

And having, by this time, finished Podge's supper for him, Mr. Flint removed the dishes to another corner of the room, and brought forth from the recesses of a mysterious little closet a dark brown jug, and one tumbler—reserving for himself one of Mr. Podge's tea-cups, as a substitute for the other that he hadn't.

"You are not entirely destitute of 'resources,' I perceive," said Podge, with a jocose smile.

"The real *supernaculum*!" replied Flint, filling bumpers. "Here's to our better acquaintance, my boy, and may we always keep our attics free from—" Mr. Flint finished the sentence by a wink, and turned his tea-cup full of raw brandy down his throat as if it had been a funnel, while Mr. Podge, to show that he wasn't in the least offended, tossed his spirits down, too—and winked, not knowingly, but recklessly—for the brandy wasn't any of your milk-and-water tippie but the real Simon Pure, as Mr. Flint had said; "and the best of it is," added that gentleman, "there wasn't overmuch duty paid on it, either!"

At which alarming point, respecting smuggled goods, Mr. Podge glanced around the room, thought of the custom-house officers, and turned slightly pale.

"I—I hope you're not a—smuggler!" stammered Podge;

and then immediately added, "excuse me—I really meant no offence;" for he saw a cloud lowering upon his companion's brow.

What Mr. Flint's answer might have been, there is no knowing; for, at that moment, there came a knock upon the door, and Mr. Flint having exclaimed, in vivid recollection of his boyish days, "open locks, whoever knocks;" the door flew open with a bang, and discovered a long, skeleton-like individual, clad in a tightly-buttoned suit of black, through which the ribs might be distinctly counted, and having on his head a white, crape-bound hat, and in his right hand a green umbrella, while the left, with the elbow gracefully crooked, reposed upon his thigh.

"Come in!" exclaimed Mr. Flint, familiarly. Whereupon the skeleton advanced, by a series of jerks, like one of the Italian fantoccini, into the apartment, his umbrella being elevated to his shoulder. But, seeing Podge for the first time, he started violently back, kept the green umbrella rattling upon the floor, as if he had been suddenly attacked with the fever and ague, and throwing a look of assumed horror at Podge—who had braced himself against the partition, which he seemed to be trying to climb up backwards, with his staring eyes riveted upon the phantom—the intruder exclaimed, in the style of Kean, "Eh—aidgels ad midisters of a-grace defed us!"

Which so alarmed Podge, that he exclaimed, with a shiver, "I hope, sir, you won't l-let him do anything v-violent!"

"Be thou a spirit of health?"——

"Quite healthy, I'm obliged to you," returned Podge.

—"Or goblin damned?"

"He's a lunatic," murmured Podge, in despair.

"Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from a-hell, I'll speak to thee!" and suddenly abandoning his assumed for his natural tone, the phantom advanced frankly towards the trembling Podge, and exclaimed—"how are you? how do you do? I hope you're well?"

Upon which, Podge, not knowing what else to do, stretched out his hand, and the stranger, in a fit of absence of mind, placed the end of his green umbrella in it.

"Come—come," put in Mr. Flint; "smother that nonsense, my boy, and take a 'snifter.' And the alacrity with which the phantom disposed of the 'snifter' was truly astonishing.

"I beg a thousand pardons," suddenly exclaimed Mr. Flint; "singular obliviousness; Podge, allow me to introduce you to Mr. Ferris—"

Podge looked alarmed.

"I hope you're well, sir," said the phantom cordially, stepping forward, and this time giving his hand to Podge—and Podge observed that he wore black gloves, and that the gloves had no fingers. "Don't trouble yourself, Flint—I'll do it myself," he added, as Mr. Flint was advancing to complete the introduction; "my name, sir, is F. Ferguson Ferris, of nowhere, in particular, or anywhere you can find me!" and he handed Podge his *card*.

"My friend Ferris is a trump, sir," said Flint, approvingly; "you must cultivate his acquaintance, indeed you must.



He's a living proof—a walking verification of the villainy of this world! Once a merchant in most flourishing circumstances, with wealth, health, and happiness, and twelve small children, to give a zest to life, behold him now the wreck of what he was. Why, sir, he got so low at one time, that I was obliged to dive to the bottom of a well to find him, and so high, at another period of his career, that we behold him in the fifth story of a museum, playing the living skeleton to delighted audiences! And how did he lose this situation? you will naturally inquire. I'll tell you, sir—and I assure you the anecdote is worthy of record. Finding that he was a 'card'—not 'card, a piece of paper;' but 'card, anything or anybody that draws money into an exhausted treasury'—the manager, of his own accord, advanced my friend Ferris's salary; but Ferris got to eating extravagant dinners, and what not, and drank too much half-and-half to be altogether consistent with his line of business; and the consequence was, that he began to grow fat, and was discharged—when one week more would have given him the corporosity of an alderman. Ferris—who, as you perceive, has relapsed to his original thinness—is now stump-speaker at temperance meetings and various political assemblages, by which he contrives to earn a precarious livelihood; and it is, in fact, for the purpose of attending one of these meetings that he has honored me with his company to-night."

"My friend says nothing but what is strictly correct, I assure you," added Ferris, "but he has omitted a single item, which, although of no consequence in the abstract, it may be

as well to lug in; I have the honor to be, sir, a member of the Charles Kean Dramatic Association, of this city. Allow me, sir, to present you with a ticket," and he handed Podge a square, red card, with a spread eagle sitting on the head of Shakspeare (seemingly occupied in feeling the poet's bumps), and having emblazoned on it the name of the association, and underneath, in a vigorous style of penmanship, the words, "Mr. Ferris's night." "We are not allowed to sell tickets, as a business, sir," proceeded Ferris; "but any time you may desire to expend a few extraneous quarters, you may gratify the charitable propensity by subscribing your name to a paper—you comprehend. I haven't one ready, just now, or I'd give you a chance as it is."

"Oh! never mind," said Podge; "any other time will do as well."

"I must not forget to mention," added Mr. Ferris, "that on Thursday night, I impersonate Shakspeare's celebrated character of 'Hamlet'—

'To be, or not to be—that is the question!'

on which occasion I hope to count you among my audience."

"I shall be most happy," returned Podge.

Another libation was then disposed of by the two, and Podge became so elated on the strength of the brandy, that he even consented to accompany Mr. Flint, and the ambitious Ferris, to Hum-drum Hall, where the Anti-punishment-for-any-kind-of-crime Society was that night to hold a meeting, at which it was Ferris's intention to deliver an oration. Ho

rushed into his room, hurried on his clothes *ad libitum*, and shortly appeared again in that of Mr. Flint, having in his hand a bunch of Havanas—a present from some acquaintance, of course. These the amateur and the fancy gentleman grasped at as a luxury, and lighting their cigars, the two sallied forth.

We will not describe the animation and enthusiasm which prevailed at the meeting of the Anti-punishment-for-any-kind-of-crime Society that night; how Mr. Ferris delivered a most eloquent speech, in which he tore the star-spangled banner into shreds, and completely used up the London Association for the diffusion of returned convicts—which, he said, had sent over five thousand burglars, pickpockets, and so forth, to America during the preceding twelve months, thus taking the bread out of the mouths of many of our own fellow-citizens—who were overwhelmed by this mighty foreign invasion, as cities are overwhelmed in Switzerland by the rush of the mighty avalanche. We will not dwell, either, upon the vociferous applause with which this masterly effort of genius was received by the densely-packed audience, for the details were next morning disseminated over the length and breadth of the land by the public prints, and the reader, *if he will take the trouble to look over his file of newspapers* (of course every “old file” preserves the papers) will find them.

“He’s a wonderful genius, is Ferris,” said Mr. Flint, when they were going home alone, after all was over; “he’ll be some ‘pumpkins,’ too, before he’s many years older, I can tell you. Aiming for Congress, sir.”

“No!” returned Podge, incredulously.

"Fact, sir!—mark if my words don't come true. Already, sir, the prominent part which he has taken in the proceedings of the Anti-punishment-for-any-kind-of-crime Society has secured him the patronage of the responsible editor of one of our leading journals, who keeps his name constantly before the public, and has pronounced several of his speeches to be masterpieces, in their way. He'll be in Congress yet, sir, see if he don't—unless some disappointed politician shoots him, to prevent his going there; and I shouldn't wonder, considering the luck he's had all along, if somebody did it—for this is a villainous world, sir; a villainous world!"

And here, Mr. Flint having attained his attic-door, bolted in, insisted on their taking another glass together, for the purpose of cementing their friendship, and then bade his fellow-lodger good-night. Podge, overcome by the liquor he had drank, retired immediately to bed, where he got so far as to pull off one boot and untie his cravat, and went dead asleep against time—not even hearing the "serenade" which Mr. Flint flattered himself that he was inflicting upon him.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## MONEY GETS TIGHT.

ON a certain evening towards the close of the year, Pryce Benedick prepared to leave the counting-house with less than his usual alacrity. The foreign mails had that morning arrived with news of a character that made the money market sink far below its usual wont; and many a merchant who had that morning gone to his business with a cheerful or careless countenance, returned at evening with a cloud upon his brow. On Mr. Benedick the news seemed to have fallen like a thunderbolt. Some little insecurity in the aspect of affairs for some weeks past had caused him to give his accounts, in mercantile parlance, "a general overhauling," and the wealthy merchant was astounded to find on what a precipice he had been standing. Over-speculation, in fact, had so shaken both his means and his credit, that a slight convulsion in commercial circles would have brought the crumbling fabric in ruins about his ears.

But Pryce was not altogether devoid of sense. "Half a loaf," he thought, recalling one of his deceased father's sayings—"half a loaf is better than none. It will come hard to us at first, but we must retrench, or it will be still harder."

To *say* retrench was a very easy matter. But to *effect* the

thing—that, Pryce felt, would not be quite so easy. Mrs. Benedick had a will of her own, as he had more than once found, to his cost, and the most difficult thing of all was to break it to her.

The family were all assembled, when Pryce got home, and were gathered in a circle about the centre table, admiring a magnificent shawl, which Mrs. Benedick had that afternoon purchased for herself, at Stewart's, at the moderate figure of *one thousand dollars*, and a superb necklace, intended for her unmarried daughter, who had thus far, lacking any extravagant charms herself, tried all the novelties of all the jewelers' stores in town without having created more than a passing sensation. That there was something uncommonly handsome, as well as costly, about the necklace, may be inferred from a remark which her brother had condescended to make during the evening:—

"If that don't fetch 'em," he said, "I don't know what will."

The entrance of Mr. Benedick himself cut short whatever other remarks Max might have intended to bestow on the subject; on seeing his father, Max merely said—not as to a parent, but as one man of the world might say to another—"How do, governor! any news in the money circles to-day? Want two or three hundred myself to-morrow. Dodger's nag's come to town, and I've agreed to swap mine off for his."

"You'd better let Dodger and his nag alone, sir," replied Pryce, sternly.

"What's the row, now, governor?" asked Max, who was about to leave the room, and who now perceived for the first time the cloud upon the brow of his honored parent.

"You shall know presently," was the answer. "All I have to say to you now is, to request that you will go into the library, and wait for me till I come. You'll find books there to amuse you," Pryce added, sarcastically.

"Books! thank you, governor: I went there one day to look for something, and ruined a suit of clothes by the experiment."

"Well—wait there, at any rate."

"Better be spry about it, then," rejoined Max, going out. "Got an engagement at six, and couldn't wait after that if the world was on fire."

"Children are not what they used to be, or they'd have *some* respect for their father," growled Pryce, as his son retreated. "Helen, will you oblige me by seeing that Max doesn't get impatient?—that's a good girl."

"What next, I wonder," growled Helen, as she banged the door after her.

"Mr. Benedick," said his amiable helpmate, with a stare of fashionable surprise—"are you mad, or have you been indulging in something stronger than gooseberry this evening?"

"You may well say *stronger*," he returned, rather emphatically. "If there is anything to which I can liken the dose I have taken to-day, it would be *gall*. Mrs. Benedick,

prepare your mind for shocking disclosures : I am a RUINED MAN !”

“Ruined, Mr. Benedick !”

The woman of fashion experienced, for the first time in many, many years, something like a natural emotion. The word seemed to have paralyzed her, and there she sat, with her recently purchased luxuries about her, unable to utter another syllable. She had heard that dreadful word applied to others, and had laughed to hear it ; but now that it had come home to her, she began to comprehend it in all the fearful intensity of its meaning.

“Yes, wife—ruined. I have done my best to ward off the blow that falls so heavily upon us both—I have made every sacrifice that my business would admit of making—and have pushed my credit until I can push it no farther. All that is to be done is, to look our new-born troubles full in the face, and to make the best of them, as others have done before us.”

“That’s very philosophical, and would look very nice on paper,” said Mrs. Benedick, summoning all her courage to hear the worst. “But for people in our position some things may not be quite so easy to bear as others.”

“We must bear what has come upon us, nevertheless, and the further we advance to meet misfortune the less we shall feel. Briefly, the condition of affairs is this : I have been over-speculating, in view of the expected rise in property, until all my spare cash is locked up in houses and lands. Property,



however, has experienced a sudden reverse, and is selling at rates perfectly ruinous to recent purchasers. Stocks have fallen lower than has been known for many years; and, as if to prove that misfortunes never visit us singly, an insurance concern in which I am largely interested has just failed. I have postponed the disclosure until now, in the hope that something might occur to turn the scale in our favor; but on the top comes a whole budget of dispiriting news from abroad, and I am at last under the necessity of giving way before the pressure."

"But what are we to do, then?" asked Mrs. Benedick, with a look of genuine affright.

"There is only one course left for us," replied Mr. Benedick, pale as death, but as firm as marble; "we must retrench."

"Retrench!" returned his wife, absolutely aghast at the idea.

"Certainly. There is nothing impossible in that."

"*Retrench*, indeed! Why, Mr. Benedick, you do not know what you are saying. Suppose things *do* look dark for us, the world does not know the difference, and where's the use of living if one cannot keep up appearances?"

"There it goes!" said Pryce, impatiently; "keeping up appearances is all that one half of your sex think of. Remember what our friends, the Lyles, got by trying to keep up appearances. For the sake of keeping up appearances some women will break their husbands' hearts, ruin their fortunes, and entail never-ending misery upon themselves and their descendants. The dread of being outdone in splendor by

their neighbors is to such women far more potent than the desire to make their households happy. When will this frightful nightmare of society be vanquished?"

Ah! Pryce—you talk capitally now. How was it that you did not act upon this belief before?

"If concealment were possible," continued Mr. Benedick, "we might indeed still persist in glossing over our ticklish situation, as more than one of our fashionable friends are doing at this moment. But the hour for disguises has gone by. Read that!"

And Pryce placed in his wife's hands a newspaper, containing a rumor of his coming failure.

For a moment Mrs. Benedick was silent. But suddenly a light dawned in her eyes.

"This is all clear enough to ourselves," she said; "but no names are mentioned, and perhaps ——"

"True, no names are given, but the fact of my coming ruin is as well known to-day on Change as the news by the steamer."

"But this paragraph is not true. It says that you have done some things that—that—good heavens, Pryce! *you* have not made use of the names of others without their consent?"

"The account exaggerates, but there is some ground for all that it contains. You see I came home determined to be candid with you."

"Oh! Pryce—Pryce—why have you done such a thing?"

"Can *you* ask me why?" he replied, sternly, and casting upon her as he spoke a glance beneath which her own eyes

quickly sought the floor. "Whence came the immense sums—the apparently inexhaustible appliances from which the support of your costly and magnificent entertainments has been derived? How could you suppose that all this extravagance was to be sustained, knowing as you did the extent of my income and your own? Aye, weep! it will do you good, Louise, if there is one corner in your heart yet uncorroded by the blight of fashion! You knew as well as I that we were incurring debts that might—that probably never would be defrayed, and yet, with this knowledge constantly before you, you plunged recklessly into the whirlpool of fashionable dissipation. Our dishonor was certain—our ruin complete. There was but one course left. Alice, my brother's, must be the victim. For a short time the means answered the end. Then came the necessity for concealment. I thought of you and of our children, and to save them for a brief while longer the knowledge of a father's shame, I plunged still deeper into dishonor. I have succeeded," he concluded, "in getting my creditors to take into consideration a proposal for a compromise, and my standing hitherto may avert from my unsullied name the disgrace of a public exposure. Whether *that* takes place, depends, Louise, upon ourselves—upon you!"

"I am in a maze of doubt and confusion. How—in what way are we to begin?"

"We must immediately set about reducing our expenses, which are, at present, enormous, and hardly justifiable under

any circumstances, when we—hem! when we consider the want and privation going on around us.”

Mr. Benedick said this really with a glow upon his cheek, for he remembered his own delinquencies in this particular.

“I fear that what you say is only the truth,” rejoined his wife.

“Well, then—I am glad you are so reasonable—the first item I propose to operate upon is your carriage.”

“Pryce—my carriage!”

“Yes, your carriage.”

“That beautiful, unique turn-out that we bought of —— & Co., the fashionable carriage-makers, only this season!”

“And which you will bear in mind we have not yet paid for, my dear.”

“That is of no account. Tradesmen can wait.”

“They can, but they won’t, my dear! Sometimes they prove to be obstinate, and in such cases a suit—eh? What say you? Shall we return the vehicle to its owner, and frankly acknowledge that we are too much embarrassed to pay him?”

“Oh, shocking! I should never have the face. And think, too—what would the Cummingses say?”

“Say? Why, if their opinion is worth having at all, that we are honest people, and have too high a sense of what is right and just to make others suffer from the fruits of our folly.”

“We shall have to *walk*, too, to our next invitation. How shocking!”

"It would be shocking, I allow."

"Of course; I knew you would."

"And therefore, to prevent mortifications, we must refuse in future all invitations that may be sent us."

"Why, my dear Pryce, you will positively make me laugh. Refuse an invitation! What should I think if my friends were to treat me thus?"

"You must give no more 'jams,' my dear, and then they will have no chance to complain."

All this was dreadful to think of, and it went near to kill Mrs. Benedick. But there was no way of avoiding the sacrifice, and the thing was done. Pryce Benedick divided the greater portion of his property among his creditors, and retired with his family and just enough to live upon, to his country-seat on the Hudson, a "ruined man," as some termed him, but if he had rightly known his own position, with prospects of happiness far brighter than he had ever known before. Max, however, could not "stand" the country; he was not cut out for a clod-hopper, he said, and as he had a little money of his own, bequeathed to him by a relative not long deceased, he started for Europe, as "the only place where a feller could live with any degree of comfort." Helen was not more enamored of rural life, and shortly afterward eloped with an officer in the army—in short, Major Dabster. As for Mrs. Benedick, she fell sick immediately upon her removal from her splendid mansion; and even Alice having been torn from them, Pryce was left alone to minister to her wants: a desolate man.

One day—the same on which the Benedicks left the city for ever—a group of men fell into conversation in front of the Exchange. There was a great deal of laughing and joking among the crowd, most of whom seemed intent on the same subject, and presently two of them turned away, talking—one was Cousin Minns, and the other the self-same gentleman whom the Benedicks had striven to decoy into a match with their youngest daughter.

“I thought he’d come to it at last,” said Minns, whose lips had scarce yet lost the taste of the last oyster supper he had eaten at Benedick’s expense. “No one can support such extravagance long, and survive.”

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## MISFORTUNES NEVER COME SINGLY.

THE day came at last when Herbert was to enter upon the practice of his duties as a member of the bar, and all was bustle and confusion at the Cottage. Herbert had taken rooms in Wall street, determined on making a bold dash for business, and already a gilt sign, with Herbert Humphreys, Attorney and Counsellor at Law, conspicuously blazoned upon it, indicated the way to his office. Mr. Humphreys saw the place comfortably furnished; Violet busied herself embroidering curtains, and in fabricating a skull-cap and a pair of slippers, that Herbert might do the thing in style. There were books and other appurtenances in abundance. Nothing was wanting but the clients, and, as Herbert said, after a month had gone by without bringing the expected rush of applicants, "that was the worst of it!" Still, however, he did not allow himself to feel discouraged, but continued patiently studying to master the difficulties that presented themselves—well-knowing that, in the end, perseverance must be rewarded.

While Herbert, the child of adversity, was thus laboring to better his condition, happy in the consciousness of his own good intentions, and in the applause of those for whom he

thus exerted himself, Max Benedick, the son of prosperity, was ruining health and happiness by a style of living which, it was evident, if persisted in, could only lead to ruin.

In the meanwhile the plans of Crawley were arriving at maturity, and he was only awaiting a favorable opportunity to put them in successful operation.

Things were in this position when an incident occurred which totally altered the aspect of affairs at the Cottage. Violet had one morning betaken herself to the garden, to indulge in her favorite stroll by the river's side (Mr. Humphreys and Herbert had gone to town together, and Mrs. Marston was on a visit among some of the neighbors), when two rough-looking men darted suddenly upon her from the shrubbery, where they had been concealed, and twisting a handkerchief round her mouth to prevent her outcries, hurried her towards a boat that was lying in wait. This precaution was, however, unnecessary, for she had been so frightened at the occurrence that she had swooned on being first approached by her abductors. While the two ruffians were conveying her to the boat, others had entered the cottage (Biddy took to flight the moment she saw them), and after ransacking it until their desires were satisfied, set fire to the curtains and hastily abandoned the premises.

The excitement occasioned by this high-handed outrage knew no bounds. Mr. Humphreys caused an advertisement to be inserted in several of the papers, offering rewards for the detection of the perpetrators, but all to no purpose. Equally vain were the personal efforts of the old man and Herbert.



They could only hope that time would dissolve the mystery which attended the transaction.

As if to illustrate the old saying, that misfortunes never come singly, Mr. Humphreys was destined to experience still further reverses.

Since the partial destruction of the Cottage, Mr. Humphreys had been considerably embarrassed in his circumstances by the failure of a company in which he was concerned, and the future was beginning to look gloomy enough to both the old man and Herbert. They were seated one day, shortly after the fire, in the little parlor, now so gloomy and deserted, discoursing of past occurrences and future prospects.

"If things do not alter for the better," said Mr. Humphreys, in the course of their disconsolate conversation, "I shall have to return to business, although my conscience tells me that I ought to have been condemned, long ago, as unseaworthy."

"Never, sir," replied Herbert, energetically; "you are old, and the hardships of the city are too much for any one to endure at your time of life. I will work my fingers to the bone—I will do anything however humble, rather than that you should be put to trouble. Nay, I will go to sea; I am young and strong, and with youth and strength on my side, who knows what I may not achieve in my new profession?"

"You're a good boy, Herbert," was Mr. Humphreys' cautious answer; "but you forget that you would be compelled to leave behind you, perhaps for years, an old man whose infirmities are growing upon him every hour, and who is no longer strong enough to breast the storm unaided. No, no,

boy—try something else. The sea is a dangerous element, and many are the young hopes and trusting hearts that lie buried in its treacherous depths. So that idea must be abandoned, too.”

Their conversation was here brought to a termination by a gentle knock at the door; and, Herbert having shouted to the visitor to come in, it opened, and the space was partly filled up by a lean, speculative personage, who advanced into the apartment with a small gold snuff-box in his hand, and looked with a scanning eye upon the various objects, as if calculating what they would bring, if disposed of under the hammer. In the dusky atmosphere of the entry beyond were dimly visible two burly figures—which fact, however, was unnoticed by Herbert and his protector, the attention of both being riveted upon the intruder.

“I beg your pardon, gentlemen, for disturbing you so early this pleasant morning; but, ahem! business is business, you know, and time and tide wait for no man—not even for us. Ahem!”

“To what circumstance may we attribute the honor of this visit?” asked Herbert, with a look of plain dislike.

“Why, really, gentlemen, I’m sorry to be the bearer of ill-tidings, but business is business, you know, and must be attended to. In short, I have the honor to be an agent for the company in which these premises are insured, and suspicious circumstances having developed themselves——”

“Why, you don’t mean to say that you suspect Mr. Humphreys of playing the incendiary?” cried Herbert, fiercely.

"The law must decide that point, young gentleman. *I* have only my duty to perform," replied the tender-hearted visitor, taking out his note book, and beginning to make memoranda of the different articles about him. "In the private relations of life, you will find no one more charitable than myself; but this is a very different matter. Business is business, and—ahem!—you may come in, Messrs. Grasp and Catchem; you may come in."

At this bidding, the two burly individuals aforesaid walked coolly into the apartment, and one of them, as if he were about to confer a favor, stepped up to the old gentleman, and presented him a neatly folded paper, with the air of one who gives another the title deeds to a fortune.

In vain Herbert besought them to deal gently with his protector.

"It's our perffession," replied the official, apologetically, "and we can't stop for to be perlite on such occasions."

"Come, come, there, gentlemen," exclaimed the visitor, whose name was Gripe, sharply; "I've nearly finished my inventory, and I find you still palavering with your prisoners." Whereupon the officers made a demonstration towards Mr. Humphreys, but Herbert seizing the poker from the grate—by some accident it happened to be red hot—rushed between the officers and the object of their *attachment*, and brandishing his formidable weapon, bade them stand off.

"You shall not touch him! he shall not go to jail; I will die before he shall go there!" he shouted frantically, and again the poker whirled about the heads of the surprised

functionaries, with a vehemence which admonished them to keep their distance. Watching his opportunity, however, one of the officers succeeded by a dexterous movement in wrenching the instrument of vengeance from Herbert's grasp, and a struggle ensued, which might have ended disastrously for Herbert, had not a strange voice been heard to exclaim from the landing :

"That's it, my fighting cock ! Go it, little one ! Aha ! a few more touches like that will bring you off, covered with glory !"

And then there was a sudden rush made into the apartment by somebody unknown ; a succession of sounds, as of the application of a pair of very determined "fives" to somebody's ears ; and the next moment, Messrs. Gripe, Grasp, and Catchem were lying miscellaneously about the room, with looks expressive of the severe treatment to which they had been exposed.

Having accomplished this daring exploit to his entire satisfaction, the hero of the fight very coolly threw his legs astraddle over a chair, and leaning with his arms upon the back, deliberately surveyed the scene before him, whistling, the while, his favorite fragment from "Lovely Rose."

"Assault and battery—a flagrant case—you're all witnesses," exclaimed Gripe, when he found himself able to rise, and thinking not of the bruises he had received, but of the damages that the law might award him.

"Violence prepense and aforeconsidered," added Grasp, following his employer's example, and rubbing his flanks wofully, as he regained his upright position.

"Interruptin' of the officers of the law in their solemn duty," groaned Mr. Catchem, with one hand upon his bowels, and a large tear in each eye.

"Oh, sir, I'm afraid that you've got yourself in trouble on my account," said Herbert, taking the intruder's hand, and shaking it heartily.

"Oh, not in the least, young 'un," replied Mr. Flint (for he it was), with an air of astonishing composure, "I've seen these grigs before to-day—they know me well enough; how are ye, Grasp? how-de-do, Catchem, my boy?"

"In for it again, Tim?" said Grasp; "it's some months since we've had the pleasure of your company, and this time, we calculate, you'll make a longer stay than usual."

And hereupon Mr. Catchem, who was examining the limbs of his employer, to see if any of them were broken, began whistling to himself.

"No, thank you, Billy; much obliged to ye for the invitation; but, as I've an engagement to meet some ladies at the Points to-night, I don't think I shall be able to come."

"None o' your nonsense, now, Tim," replied Grasp; "it's very unpleasant for us, we allow; but where there's no help for it, you know—"

"Of course," said Catchem; "our friend, Flint, respects the dignity o' the law too much to see its mandates violated. Oh! everything's in form," he added, producing the writ. "You see—fact is—old man, here—hard times—long score run up—no funds—house takes fire—strong suspicions—"

These disjointed pieces of information he half-whispered in Mr. Flint's ear.

"A hard case it is," remarked the latter gentleman, thoughtfully. "The whole affair is in a nut-shell. This gentleman here, being burned out and robbed into the bargain, the law says he must take lodgings at its expense—"

"And very considerate of it, too," put in Mr. Catchem.

"But you, sir—your countenance is not marked with cruelty like theirs; you will prevent this act of gross injustice, will you not?" asked Herbert, appealing to Flint.

"I'm afraid there's no help for it, my young gentleman," replied Flint. "You see, money's wanted here, and, as you don't appear to have any, and as I haven't got a rap myself, and old snipes, there, don't appear disposed to accommodate, why, the law, as he says, must take its course—unless, indeed—"

"Ay, unless," said Herbert, anxiously, while the officers and Mr. Gripe leaned forward to catch the suggestion.

"Unless our good friends, here, Mr. Grasp and the gentlemen were to let the old fellow go on their own responsibility. Eh, now, boys? what do you say to it?" asked Flint, very gravely.

A gentle burst of laughter, and the joint exclamation of "that's a good 'un," from both the officers simultaneously, was the answer to Mr. Flint's curious proposal.

"Come—come, we're wasting time," exclaimed Gripe, impatiently.

"And must he go, then?" sighed Herbert, with a look of the utmost despair, and embracing his protector as he spoke.

"There's no help for it, my young gentleman, just now," replied Flint, "but, depend upon it, he won't remain there long. You have friends that you are little aware of, who will obtain the release of the old covey, there, and make you both happy and comfortable for life."

Mr. Flint then requested a private interview with the officers, before they proceeded to the performance of their duty, which request being complied with, that gentleman retired into the entry with Messrs. Grasp and Catchem, with whom, in a few minutes, he re-entered the room—the faces of all three beaming with satisfaction. The officers then advised Mr. Gripe to "settle it amicably" with Mr. Flint, who, they said, was ready to pay handsomely for the damage he had occasioned, under a mistaken notion of the position of things. They then separated Herbert from Humphreys, on whose neck the youth had thrown himself, the old man, in his sudden stupefaction, uttering not a syllable, except to bless him, and began descending the stairs, followed by Herbert, and likewise by Flint, who merely paused to wring Gripes' hand, at the same time leaving in it a ten dollar bill; which Gripe thought, at the time, extremely liberal, but which he shortly afterward found, to his sorrow and chagrin, to be counterfeit.

"Such is life!"

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## THE DRAMATIC ASSOCIATION.

THERE are men—old, gray-headed, self-opinionated men—who have passed their entire lives in the midst of the din and bustle of the city, scarcely venturing out of it as far as Hoboken or Staten Island, for a breath of unadulterated air (and even on such occasions refusing to wander out of sight of their beloved mausoleum of bricks and mortar, wherein so many young ambitious hopes are yearly buried, lest, in their absence, it might take unto itself wings, and fly away), and who look upon Coney Island as the veritable *ultima thule*—seriously believing that it has a governor, and yields a large vote towards the popular elections; who have no unusual sights or sounds to disturb the even tenor of their existence, and who, in fact, know nothing of what is transpiring “behind the scenes” in the great theatre of metropolitan life. And it is this fact, possibly, which ensures the prolongation in our midst of those numerous evils of which society so justly complains; for he who has always sturdily refused to become familiarised with the “inner heart of things,” as they exist around him, cannot comprehend the full extent and consequence of the said evils, and shakes his head dubiously when



told of them—believing the pictures thus placed beneath his notice to be too highly colored, and refusing in his selfish apathy to assist in the forwarding of any measures which may be conceived for their expurgation.

Now there exist, in the most densely populated portions of the city, at this present writing, a number of establishments of peculiar character, known by the appropriate name of Dramatic Associations, the members of which are to be found, principally, among the better-paid class of clerks, and incipient lawyers, whose principal design is to improve their oratorical powers and steel their nerves to the faces of an audience, while that of the former is usually a “frolic.” Sometimes, however, there starts up among them an ambitious tyro, who enjoys the acquaintance of several third-rate actors at one of the minor theatrical establishments, and who becomes suddenly impregnated with a dramatic furor—in consequence of which, you behold him, at some future period of his career, bellowing and ranting in some insignificant part, at some one of the minor theatres aforesaid. Occasionally, but not often, a really good performer is hammered out in these dramatic smithies, and the young gentlemen who rejoice in the title of members, are fond of relating anecdotes of how this or that tragedian used to “spout” in a certain obscure cellar in Philadelphia, and how sundry other dramatic celebrities, whose names occupy a position in *that* “niche of fame,” which, it strikes us, must be a niche of wonderful dimensions, to make room for all that are yearly added to it—once ranted it in a *recherché* little place which stood upon the

corner of Broadway and Grand Street, on the spot now occupied by American Hall.

The Dramatic Association is very particular in the choice of its members; it is governed by a constitution and by-laws, and has a "president" to watch over its interests. When any person desires to join, his name is proposed at one of the regular private meetings of the society, and an election takes place—all the members present voting, for or against. If elected, he pays an initiation fee of five dollars, or thereabout, and after that a certain weekly sum as "dues;" as long as he fulfils which exactions, he is considered a member. Each performance is given under the name of a particular member, the privilege being enjoyable by all in rotation, and on this occasion the individual whose "night" it is, has the privilege of selecting his pieces, and choosing any character suited to his fancy—the "stage manager" filling out the remainder of the "cast." There are a certain number of tickets issued, and a limited number of these given to each member, who distributes them *gratis* among his particular friends. And most unmerciful audiences they generally are; for each member has some rival among the "company," whom he is desirous of seeing "put down;" and, between his friends and the friends of the rival performer, such a confusion is continually kept up, that the words of the play can only be heard at intervals.

The evening, "big with fate" in the circumstances of the ambitious Ferris, had, at last, come round, and Mr. Podge was quietly seated in his lonely dormitory, intent upon the perusal of "*Cecilia Mordaunt; or, the Adventures of a Lady of*"

*Quality*," the last fashionable novel, kindly loaned him by the accomplished Mrs. Thingummy, of What-d'ye-call Square, when his door flew suddenly open, and a voice like the commingled crash of all the kettle-drums in the incantation scene of "*Der Freischutz*," was heard to sing, or rather to yell :

"I am the bold thunder !"

which so startled Mr. Podge, who was at that moment traversing a mysterious passage in a ruined abbey, in company with his heroine, that he let fall the book ; and, snatching up from the fire a toasting-fork, on which a piece of bread was burning, stood resolutely upon the defensive. Upon which, Ferris, supposing that Podge was making a scene of it, in allusion to the approaching performance, dashed wildly at him with the green umbrella, and commenced poking him to such an extent, that Podge was seriously put to it to preserve his limbs from contusions.

"Caitiff!—unheard-of monster ! villain ! fiend !" shouted the excited Ferris, continuing the broad-sword exercise, as he had seen it done upon the stage.

"W-w-what the devil do you mean, sir ?" at last gasped Podge, dropping into a chair, in a state of perfect exhaustion, and having, by this time, made up his mind that Ferris was a maniac, freshly escaped from Blackwell's Island.

"What do I mean ?" retorted Ferris, jocularly ; "I suppose, now, you'll pretend you don't know me—it wouldn't surprise me a bit !"

"I must confess," said Podge, "that at this moment I have no distinct recollection——"

"Stuff and nonsense, my boy!—won't do, so you needn't try it on!" continued Mr. Ferris, knowingly.

"Try what on?" inquired Podge, much mystified.

"Pretend not to know *me*?" continued Ferris, whose vanity was a little nettled at the idea; "Me! whose eloquence held the whole multitude spell-bound for two mortal hours, on a recent occasion, and whose oration was pronounced by a leading journal to be one of the most startling efforts of genius ever concocted for the public ear?"—and Ferris favored Mr. Podge with a look of withering scorn, under which that little individual shrank into next door to nothing.

"Oh! yes!—excuse my forgetfulness—I remember," stammered Mr. Podge; "you are the gentleman who addressed the Anti-any-kind-of-crime Society. To be sure; how could I be so stupid!" and Mr. Podge tapped himself upon the forehead, in illustration of the last remark.

"The same," rejoined Ferris, bowing. "So, now we're all right again, Podge, and I suppose you'd have no objection to lend me——"

"I really—at this moment—happen to be extremely short," snuffled Podge.

"Your attention," continued Ferris, without heeding the interruption; whereat Mr. Podge became so red in the face, that his head resembled a full-blown dahlia.

"I am all ears," he replied, in some confusion.

"That's very evident!" said Ferris, in an *aside*. "But, let's cut preliminaries. You remember that, in the course of our last meeting, I dropped some allusions of a theatrical nature——"

"Distinctly," replied Podge.

"This is the night——" continued Ferris.

"This?" Podge looked incredulous.

"'That either makes me, or undoes me quite,'" added Ferris, quoting.

"My dear, sir!" exclaimed Podge, with much concern in his countenance, "I really hope that you'll get safely through it."

"Never fear, my boy! I've gotten through more trying scenes than that," replied Ferris, coolly.

"Failed often?" inquired Podge, earnestly.

"*Failed*, sir!" rejoined Ferris; "I never failed in my life, sir; although, on many occasions, I flatter myself that I've *brought down the house!*"

"What a villain!" thought Podge; "ruined his friends to save himself."

"Stay," said Ferris, thinking deeply; "I believe that I did commit a murder, once."

Podge started from his companion as if he had been an adder.

"Yes—owing to untoward circumstances, which I could not prevent, I undertook the part of *Edgar*, and was 'damned' for't!"

"'Poor Tom's a-cold!'"

and he was cold enough before I had done with him, I can tell you!"

"Monster!" exclaimed Podge, in a hoarse whisper. "Offer to take the part of a friend, and slay him afterwards!"

"Alas, sir!" answered Ferris, with a melancholy look, "Edgar was no friend of mine; the part, sir, proved my worst enemy. In fact, I have not fully recovered from the effects of it yet."

"Oh! you are speaking theatrically!" said Podge, brightening up, all at once.

"Of course; how else? but sink the twaddle, my boy, for it's getting late, and I'm extremely desirous that you should see my performance—with which, I promise you, you will not fail to be pleased. Got your tickets, of course?"

"Somewhere, I believe," replied Podge, who now began to remember all that had occurred on the night when Flint and he had clubbed their "resources." And, after much fumbling and fussing, he found the missing articles at the bottom of the tea-pot, where he had placed them for safe keeping.

At this crisis, Mr. Flint himself made his appearance with the fiddle, playing "Hail Columbia," which, however, he changed to the "Merry Swiss Boy," at an expostulatory motion from Podge, who was getting ready to accompany Ferris.

"Going, going!" exclaimed Mr. Flint, in the language of his vocation. "To let—an orchestra, consisting of one fiddle and a pair of lungs, capable of discoursing any kind music, from the overture of 'Ernani,' down to the crunching of a

turkey-bone, or the opening of an oyster. How much shall I have?"

"My friend Joe says nothing but what is strictly correct," said Ferris, with an admiring glance at Flint; "on common occasions our association dispenses with the vulgar attraction of a band, but, as I have an eye to popularity, and know the value of these seemingly insignificant things, I have persuaded my inestimable friend here to personate an orchestra—for this night only!"

"Only too happy to be of service," replied Flint.

And Podge having completed his arduous toilet, the three took their course along Broadway, in the direction of Gothic Hall—in an upper story of which edifice the aforesaid society held its meetings, and regaled its audiences.

Following in the wake of the variously dressed crowd who were thronging into the place, Podge, deserted by his companions, ascended an incalculable number of steps, and shortly found himself in a lofty and commodious apartment, which had been fitted up in an exceedingly pretty style, with boxes and parquette, and a raised stage, the chief fault of which appeared to be its want of size. He was not allowed much time for reflection, however; for, in the midst of the wheezing, and shuffling, and whispering, which prevailed, the tones of Mr. Flint's darling fiddle rose upon the confined atmosphere of the place.

"Silence"—"down in front"—"hats off"—and "physic!"—a variety of cries proceeding from a number of respectably-

attired young men, with Byronic collars, dispersed throughout the "house."

Mr. Flint was in excellent spirits, and first favored his hearers with "Hail Columbia"—which he interspersed with so many "curious shakes," that no one could positively identify it. He next gave them a touch of the "Merry Swiss Boy." The audience beginning to manifest some signs of impatience, Flint commenced to inflict the "Dead-March" upon them, but luckily the curtain went up with a jerk, before he had got started, discovering a questionable-looking personage, walking about within a small compass of two feet by six, in a brown frock, pink drawers, and paper helmet (according to the style in which the ancients are somehow supposed to have attired themselves on the eve of battle—pink legs and all!) and having in his hand a spear, made of leather and stuffed with bran. The various characters next came on in their proper order, and walked curiously about, talking in pantomime, and looking at everything except the audience, of whom they seemed to "fight remarkably shy," as Flint, who had rejoined Mr. Podge, took occasion to observe.

Throughout the earlier portions, however, the auditory conducted themselves remarkably well, and were very lenient towards the actors' failings; but, when the palace scene had been run on, Mr. Podge could see numerous individuals around him rolling up their shirt-cuffs, and getting in readiness for a demonstration, while others were licking their lips, and exchanging winks with one another, which meant (explained



Mr. Flint) that these latter were about to give the *Hamlet* of the evening "a blast," to show that they considered him "no great shakes." The king, queen, and attendants made their entrances in the midst of the profoundest silence, and Podge was beginning to feel interested for the fate of Ferris, when that gentleman, in the usual black cloak, small clothes, etc., stalked on with three distinct jerks; and, with three more, brought himself to the foot-lights—being saluted, as he advanced, by a perfect Pandemonium of applauses, hootings, cat-calls, and shrill whistlings. Flint labored to stem the torrent in behalf of his friend, until he looked as if he was on the point of rupturing a blood-vessel; and, finding his boots insufficient for his purpose, he suddenly pounced like a vulture upon Podge, and, seizing him by the neck, brought that unfortunate person's head several times in violent contact with the wall, against which they were leaning, occasioning a number of prominent bumps not to be found in the catalogue of any phrenologist.

"I beg your pardon—I was excited," said Flint, on receiving from Podge an assurance that such treatment was anything but agreeable; and the next moment their attention was attracted to the stage, where Ferris was gesticulating and vociferating with extraordinary vehemence. Mr. Podge endured the five long acts, interspersed with music, with all the fortitude of a martyr at the stake; and, though he had not been able to hear a word of the performance, yet, at the termination, he expressed himself highly satisfied with his evening's amusement—professing to be especially delighted

with the *closing scene*. Ferris was so greatly tickled by these eulogiums, that his heart spontaneously opened, and the friends were invited by him to a neighboring "Shades," where they found a number of the amateurs already congregated, and where they finished the night.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## THE WRECK.

THE sea ! restless, ever moving, infinite—what myriads of secrets its fathomless depths enshrine ! What inestimable riches lie heaped together beneath its ever-swaying tide ! Sometimes a billow, more vigorous than the rest, casts up a gem—a token of the life that proved too frail to meet its power ; but few who seek its cold embrace give back a clue to whisper of their fate. Yet thousands, undismayed by the lot of those who have gone before them, to meet a silent death beneath the surging wave, tempt daily its treacherous advances ; and the legends of the mishaps, which seamen tell, serve only to enliven them, as they gayly float upon its seemingly tranquil bosom.

It was a day within the tropics ; and never shone the sun more brightly to the eyes of those who met its glances. Like a vast green carpet, the sea lay outstretched before the path of the gallant merchantman, the “Morton’s Hope ;” and from her deck a husband and wife, with their innocent little one, gazed admiringly upon the scene outstretched before them. The husband, a man of wealth and standing, was the owner of the vessel, and of many such, and, as he gazed upon the tapering spars, the spreading sails, and the intricate and per-

plexing variety of cordage, which aided to sustain the good ship on her course, he inwardly thanked heaven, that had been thus far so bounteous of its favors. But not a thought of anything beside. The world alone seemed to claim and receive his attention.

The present cruise of the "Morton's Hope" had been an unusually successful one, and she was returning to the port from which she had started, loaded with a freight which promised abundance of profit to her fortunate owners. A number of passengers accompanied her on her homeward trip, all of whom were eagerly looking forward to the enjoyments in store for them. Among these passengers was one whose frank, manly conduct and sanguine disposition had rendered him a favorite alike in the cabin and the forecastle. This was a promising lad of eighteen, who, having laid up in some South American port sufficient from his salary as a factor's clerk, to enable him to undertake a visit to his native land, was now hastening to rejoin the loved ones for whose relief he had destined his little treasure. The vessel was, in fact, within a few days' sail of her destination, and already the spires and domes of his familiar city loomed up, bright with all the tints bestowed upon them by the glowing imagination of the young, in his thoughts.

They were nearing a lovely island, whose dark green foliage seemed to offer an inviting retreat from the cares of the outward world, and the young man we have noticed was leaning idly over the taffrail, gazing with delight upon the scene, framing in his mind a host of romantic visions, when

his reverie was dispelled by the voice of the captain, who having withdrawn for a few moments to his cabin, now appears suddenly on deck, wearing over his clothes the inevitable suit of tarpaulin which skippers are wont to don when a storm is at hand.

"All hands aloft to take in sail! Passengers had better get below," he added, in a lower key. "We shall have a storm upon us directly."

"How do you manage to guess that?" asked the youth of the captain. "I see no clouds in the sky."

"Never mind how I know it," was the reply. "A storm's coming on, and in five minutes we shall be in the thick of it. It's safer below, youngster."

"Then I'll stay above, if you've no objection," said the lad; and before the captain could find words to express his admiration, the other was among the sailors, climbing, sliding and jumping from one spot to another among the rigging, as actively as the best of them.

A few seconds since, and a scarce cloud fleeced the light eastern sky; yet, strange to say, by some mysterious means unknown to landsmen, the mariner sees that a storm is impending. Scarcely are the necessary preparations made, when the wind comes whistling through the shrouds, with the fury of a demon; the noble vessel, strained to her utmost, groans and reels beneath the strength of the blast; wave follows wave across her lately spotless decks; and the sea, black as midnight, is crested with foaming white. A black veil is drawn across the heavens—seamews wheel and flit about the vessel,

screaming in dreadful unison with the gale. Occasionally, a square patch appears to open in the overhanging mass of clouds, and belches forth a stream of living fire.

Away—away before the blast! The thunder rolls—the sea-bird screams—but heed them not! The lovely island, with its dark green foliage, is a snare—away, into the broad and fathomless sea; put miles between you and the treacherous land.

Alas! Of small avail your efforts now. Yield, hardy mariner! Despair, ye loving couple! the fated vessel, for the first time in your lives, defies the helm. A bolt has marked her for destruction—unmanageable, she drifts upon those treacherous rocks—there is a fearful crash—a cry of wild despair—and, save the howling of the tempest, all is silence!

An hour has passed away; again the sun shines forth; the lone island becomes once more visible, with its inviting foliage, but no ship is there, as before. A few fragments are floating about the fatal spot, and a small board, with a single inscription, tells, plainer than words, the fate of the “Morton’s Hope!”

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## HERBERT'S NEW FRIEND.

AND now behold Mr. Humphreys, so many years an useful member of that society whose victim he was, cast into a dreary dungeon, in size not larger than the cages in which they confine wild beasts in modern menageries, without a single available friend in the world, to whom to look for assistance, and deprived of the company of the only being whose presence had been the sole ray of light which shone upon his declining years.

Here, in the society of the worst class of criminals (as though he had been already proved guilty, instead of being only accused of a crime), the heart of the good old gentleman began, for the first time in his life, to fail him.

"This day's doings has been too much for my sensitive nerves," remarked Mr. Flint, in a lachrymose tone, as, in company with Herbert, he turned away from the prison on the day in question. "After this, who'll say there's no good in human nature? But, I was just so when I was young."

Flint's recollections of his own juvenile days must have been fraught with a variety of emotions, if the truth were confessed. He had an indistinct remembrance of his mother, who had been a washerwoman, and mangled for her neigh-

bors generally, at a regular scale of prices, payable "on the nail." He could also recall the fact, that he had once been sent to a public school, from which he had played "hookey" so often, that his teachers at last sent him away as a hopeless case; and the stealing of apples from grocers' doors, and similar youthful exploits, tickled his fancy exceedingly, as it dwelt upon those reminiscences of the by-past time. From meditations such as these, the tones of Herbert's voice awakened him.

"There's some rascality about all this," Herbert said, half musingly; "and I'll spend a thousand dollars but I'll fathom it. If I *do* unravel the mystery, woe be to the culprit!"

Flint brightened up in a moment. But he did not acquaint Herbert with the course his thoughts were taking. *His* plan was caution.

"You seem to think a good deal of the old fellow," said Flint, after a moment's attentive observation of his companion.

"Next to one other," replied Herbert, despondingly, "I love him better than my life."

"That's enough; thank you——"

"For what?" asked Herbert, seeing the man about to move off rather abruptly.

"O, nothing in particular," rejoined Flint. "By the way, what's your name and number—if it's a fair question?"

Herbert, still wondering at his manner, and half doubtful if his companion was sane, gave him the desired information.

"That's ample," said Flint, mysteriously, as he noted down the address. "Not much, to be sure, for an outsider in cases



like the present, but I've accomplished wonders with a great deal less than that to go upon. What would you give, now, if as humble a character as Timothy Flint should not only restore the young woman and release the old gent, but recover for them both a large property—after the manner in which they do those things on the stage?"

"I wish you would choose some other subject for jesting," replied Herbert, flushing with resentment, and beginning to think of shaking off his pertinacious new friend—especially as he saw that more than one passer-by stopped to look after them in the course of their stroll.

"I was never more serious in my life," replied Flint, quite in earnest. "But that's neither here nor there. I've got your address, my young gentleman, and that's sufficient for my purposes. I can only tell you, by way of a parting salute, that the happiness of three individuals, who shall be nameless for the present, lies at my mercy. And so, good-bye, Masters Humphreys, until 'next time.'"

"You're getting too many irons in the fire," thought Flint, as he hurried off in the direction of the old hovel in the suburbs, where "Mother Peg," as he called her, was still presiding over the "comforts" of as reckless a crew as ever furnished a subject for pen or pencil. "Too many irons, entirely, Masters Flint. We must see if we can't by this time take one of them out."

In the meanwhile, Herbert was exceedingly puzzled to know what to make of Flint. That he was either crazed, or that he knew far more of the recent mysterious transactions

than he cared to acknowledge, Herbert felt certain, and comparatively unskilled as he was in legal matters, he felt confident that he should be able to find a way to his late companion's confidence.

The efforts made by Herbert, since the expulsion from the Cottage, to obtain a clue to the mystery of Violet's abduction and the affair of his protector's arrest (for he felt convinced that they were in some manner connected), were almost superhuman. In spite of the apparent absurdity of the thought, he could not avoid connecting Crawley with the circumstance, and the more he reflected, the more sincere became his conviction that he had at last traced the intrigue to its source. He remained quiet, however, until he could get together sufficient evidence to proceed upon; while Crawley, becoming somehow informed of what was passing, or naturally fearing that he might be implicated, kept successfully out of the way. Flint was no less wise than his employer, and, shortly after the above occurrence, the keeper of the lodging-house where he and Podge, though revolving in such widely different spheres, had found, literally, their bed and board, had occasion to complain of another absconding tenant—a circumstance which really occasioned Mr. Podge some regret, for his fashionable friends were beginning to desert him, and Flint had acted his careless part so well, that the little dandy had actually conceived a liking for him, and even for the fiddle.

It was about "ten of the clock," on one of those dark and stormy nights so absolutely indispensable to the modern

romance, that Master Herbert Humphreys sat alone before a small wood fire in his gloomy office in Wall street, which had now become to him kitchen, bed-room, and place of business. The young lawyer was absorbed in a deep fit of musing—so deeply that he had not observed the intrusion of a stranger, who, while Herbert was thus preoccupied, had entered the little apartment, taken a hurried mental inventory of its contents, and was engaged in watching the expression of Herbert's countenance—when the latter looked up, and to his astonishment encountered the fixed gaze of Flint.

"You, here!" said Herbert—"I was just this moment thinking of you."

"I know it," returned his visitor. "I know everything that's going on in your mind as well as you do yourself."

"You need not go far to make your fortune if that's the case," said Herbert, smiling.

"You may well say it," replied Flint; "I'm a *medium*. But somehow or other, I'm afraid I'm not the right kind of medium: at least, I'm sure that I'm not one of the money-making sort. Haven't even got enough to buy a loadstone, and set up shop for myself."

"That's unfortunate," said Herbert.

"Rather. But there's one consolation: I'm used to misfortune. I've got used to it just as eels get used to being skinned. Rich people say, that we poor folks don't mind our poverty because we're used to it, and I suppose that's the sense in which they mean it."

"You're a droll fellow!"

"I don't know what should make me so, unless it's the lucky issue of all my attempts at getting ahead in the world. I hope what the clergyman says about the first being last and all that, is true, or it will be rather hard for some of us. But it wasn't to show off my drollery that I came here to-night. Do you think that you would venture to place yourself under my guidance if there was an object to be accomplished?"

"It depends upon what that object might be," rejoined Herbert, who began to be strangely agitated.

"Well, then—not to lose time—it will be necessary for you to undertake with me, this very night, a long and unpleasant journey, but when you know that this journey will result in restoring the young lady and her father to all they have lost, and, in particular, in clearing the old gentleman from the suspicions that attach to him, I know you will not consider the task a hardship."

"Our acquaintance has been of so slight a character," said Herbert, "that such a proceeding would seem to savor of rashness. But I have my reasons for believing you honest—at any rate, in this. I will go with you where you please—only stopping to assure you that if foul play should be attempted, I have the means of protecting myself, and will fearlessly use them."

"Spoken like a lad of mettle!" exclaimed Flint, with animation, "Lord! what a difference between him and Crawley!"

"Crawley!" said Herbert, getting ready, "what do you know of him?"

"Nothing to his good, young man. But don't ask me any questions to-night. I shall have enough to do without that."

"Have with you then," said Herbert, resolutely. "Whether you are sincere or not I have no means of knowing, but fate, at all events, cannot have worse tricks in store than those she has lately played me."

Flint and his companion now hurried out into the street. A wagon was standing before the door, into which Flint beckoned Herbert to get. In a few moments, they had crossed Wall street ferry, and were whirling through the sand and mud of Bedford Plains at a rate which promised to bring them speedily to the end of their journey.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## THE NIGHT-RIDE ON LONG ISLAND.

FLINT seemed afraid of the darkness, and when they had left the pavements behind them, so that they could hear the sound of each other's voices, he made up for their previous silence by talking incessantly. As usual, his conversation was a running tirade upon society, with which Flint appeared to be utterly disgusted. All kinds and classes of people came under his ban. It seemed to be his settled conviction that nothing was good under the sun, and, therefore, that nothing was too good to be preyed upon. "There may be exceptions as far as *things* are concerned," said Flint, "but as for saying that there's any good in human nature—the idea's preposterous! Look at your modern reformers—how they spout and splutter away for the benefit of their kind—all out of pure love, as they say, for their fellow-creatures. But when did you ever see a modern reformer a-doing of what he wants others to do? Go to 'em, and ask 'em a favor, and see how stiff and starch they become—how they turn up their noses at you, because they happen to have a reputation for something which you have not. Look at your public benefactors, who make large donations to charitable

institutions, that they may cut a great dash in the eyes of the world, yet who refuse to give an obscure beggar a penny, because the act would never reach the ears of the public. Look at your doctors—quacks! Look at your lawyers—knaves! Look at your great generals—fools! Look at your parsons—humbugs! and look at your merchants—arrogant upstarts!”

“Society and you do not seem to be on particularly good terms,” said Herbert, smiling at Flint’s effervescence.

“That’s true enough,” replied Flint, “and I’m afraid we never shall be. The fact is, the world’s in a bad way, young man, and I dare say they’d keep your poor old uncle in that devil of a place for the remainder of his existence—if they thought there was anything to be made by it. Everything, now-a-days, is regulated by money: people live for money, marry for money, go to prison for money, and die for money! In this villainous world everything and everybody’s eternally being improved, and nothing, and nobody, seems to be at all benefited by the improvement. In fact, my young friend, we are all going to the devil, as fast as our legs can carry us. Even clergymen don’t do us the good they used to, but ride about in their elegant carriages, live in fashionable houses, regale themselves on the most sumptuous fare, and receive high salaries, while they preach humility, charity, and all that sort of rigmarole, to the parishioners. Churches are getting to be so stylish, that poor people are afraid to go in at the same door with silks and satins; and folks as can’t afford a box in Grace Church and St. Paul’s, have to resort to the theaytre, and pay twenty-five cents for morality—such morality, too, as you

don't get from the pulpit, let me tell you. Who that ever saw 'Jack Sheppard' performed, that wasn't inspired with a laudable ambition to be a Jack Sheppard himself? It's a villainous world, I repeat it."

Herbert—who saw that amid all Flint had said there was some truth, and who had been quietly indulging in speculations as to the correctness or incorrectness of Flint's philosophy—was about to put a question, when they suddenly stopped in front of a small tavern, situated in a lonely part of the island, all among sandhills and little pools of water, with here and there a stunted bush or two, and so near to the sea, that you might plainly hear the surf beating upon the beach.

"Here we get out," said Flint, giving the reins to a sleepy-looking hostler, who had just made his appearance. "The remainder of the way being anything but good travelling for horses, we shall have to walk, and if you've a shilling to spare, we'll just step in here, before we go any further, and take a snifter together, to keep out the rain."

"A snifter?" replied Herbert, wondering whether it was a species of bird, or some strange animal that he had never heard of before.

"Yes—but I cannot do justice to the article by mere words; so, come along, my young friend, and we'll drink to the health of your guardian."

Somewhat enlightened by his companion's last words, he stepped with him into the tavern, and paid for the drinks as desired—persisting in taking soda, himself, notwithstanding



Mr. Flint's glowing eulogies upon smashers, juleps, cocktails, and snifters in general.

"But, where are those whom we came all this way to see?" asked Herbert, his thoughts suddenly recurring to the business which had thrown him into the company of Flint.

"You'll see them directly, my young friend," responded Flint, lighting a stump of a cigar at the miniature gas-works kept for that purpose constantly burning upon the bar. "Youth is naturally always in a hurry, always panting to 'go ahead,'" he continued, as they once more emerged into the darkness; "but, on this occasion it will be better for us to take our time: because, in the first place, the house to which we are going is but a short distance from this; and, in the second, we are not expected until twelve, so we have just twenty minutes to make our promised haven."

Herbert was compelled to rest satisfied with the prospect before him, and they commenced their walk—if walk it could, indeed, be called. The rain, beating in their faces all the way, penetrated their thick woollen garments, and filled every crevice with the sand with which it seemed charged. Sand filled their shoes and stockings, got into their eyes, and gritted between their teeth whenever they essayed to speak. The wind blew so fiercely that it was with difficulty they advanced. Once or twice Herbert and Flint found themselves precipitated into small hollows filled with water, or wandering about at random among the little hillocks of sand, so that the twenty minutes spoken of by Flint had become an hour, and Herbert began to feel pretty well exhausted.

All at once Flint stopped.

"Here's a go!" he said, in a tone indicative of great perplexity. "I could have sworn I knew every inch of ground hereabouts, but we've lost our way in spite of us."

"Lost our way in such a place as this!" said Herbert, beginning to feel a little dismayed at the prospect of a night among the sand-hills. "I sincerely hope we have not."

Flint's reply was cut short by the hoarse bark of a dog, which suddenly rushed up from behind one of the hillocks, and overthrowing Herbert, as if he was of no consequence whatever, dashed upon Flint, and promised to make short work with him—when a voice was heard, calling upon the dog to desist.

"I beg your pardon," said the new comer. "Your time was so long past we were getting tired of waiting, and so Jemmy and I came out, supposin' you had got lost, to hunt you up."

"I'm much obliged to Jemmy," replied Flint, looking askance at the dog, which he could just manage to perceive by the light from his master's lantern. "Rather too affectionate way of greeting one that he has, though."

Before Herbert well knew what had taken place, they found themselves entering a small but comfortable cabin, situated among the sand hills, and so near to the sea that a stone might have been tossed from it into the billows. A great fire burned cheerily in the ample fire-place, and some half-dozen persons, attired as sailors, were seated about a table, drinking and playing cards, with the exception of one. It

was the stripling who had been so great a favorite on board the "Morton's Hope."

What occurred that night at the fisherman's hut did not immediately transpire. All we can say at this juncture is, that Herbert passed the night at the hut, in company with the youth we have mentioned as having been saved from the wreck, that their conversation was long and earnest, and that when he returned to town on the following day he was accompanied by one far different from Flint—who had business to transact in another direction. Herbert hurried back to his office, and was engaged the greater part of the forenoon in writing letters. That night he was visited again by Flint, who did not leave the premises until three in the morning. Had Mr. Crawley known how his emissary was passing his time, he might have thought he had cause for uneasiness.

Before the week had gone by—so incessant were Herbert's exertions—the liberation of Mr. Humphreys had been effected, there being no evidence to warrant the supposition of arson, and he found himself again, by a fortunate turn in affairs, the possessor of the dear old home which, in the excess of his patriotism, he had named Knickerbocker Cottage. Still, however, there was a cloud upon the old man's brow, which was partially dispelled by the return of Violet, accompanied by Flint—who communicated to her guardian, as he had to Herbert, a story of wrong-doing which, could Crawley have been found, would have laid him by the heels in the nearest prison.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## THE DEATH BLOW.

A MELANCHOLY winter it proved to Benedick. Shut up in his gloomy and neglected mansion at Westchester, he refused to see any kind of company, and seemed to lead an altogether isolated life. His business was left entirely in Crawley's charge; and that individual, knowing the exact state of his employer's mind, did not fail to reward himself proportionably for his services. The present and the future were alike blank to Benedick; while the Past, replete with so much of evil and so little of good, was continually present to his distracted mind.

March came at last, and brought with it no relief to his overtaken feelings. Issuing from his domicil at early morning, he would sometimes pass whole days by himself, rambling moodily in the leafless woods, regardless of the piercing winds that howled so drearily among the bare, dry branches overhead; intent, alone, upon the One Idea with which his being was impregnated.

Mrs. Benedick endured her involuntary seclusion with all the fortitude of a martyr, sometimes likening her retirement to a prison—a reflection which had any other effect than that of reconciling her with her fate.

It was a cold, unpleasant evening, and Pryce Benedick and his wife sat, wrapped in their separate thoughts, before a comfortable fire in the drawing-room. The lady was the first to break in upon this awful silence.

"It's very strange," she said, "that, for several months past, we haven't had any tidings of Julia; she was always so punctual in her epistolary correspondence—I am afraid something disagreeable has happened."

"I should not be surprised," replied Mr. Benedick, absently; "there was evidently an incompatibility of temper between her and Southdown, even while they remained beneath this roof."

"And no wonder," said Mrs. Benedick, "with such a gawky, prosing fellow for a husband! The moment she found out she couldn't have everything her own way, and go to what expense she pleased, and visit home when she pleased, she became discontented with her situation—and very properly. *I* should, I know, if I stood in her shoes!"

"Psha! You were always teaching the girl to believe herself better than she really was, and, I repeat it, I should not be surprised in the least, if Southdown had refused to live with her!"

"*He* refuse—*HE*!—refuse to live with *her*!—my offshoot!" exclaimed the indignant lady; "I'd like to catch him at it! If he should'nt feel what woman's hands can do when raised against oppression" (this was from the last book she had read)—"that's all!" and the well-meaning matron made a very significant movement with her fingers.

"It's all very fine, Mrs. Benedick," said the anathetic

partner of her woes—"but 'truth crushed to earth, will rise again,' as Shakspeare or Ben Jonson wisely observed."

"Yes—and so will an outraged and insulted woman, Mr. Benedick! Oh! if you only knew the sex as I know 'em! but psha! how can you enter into all those tender emotions which sway fond woman's breast——"

"Pardon me, my dear! if those you have just exhibited were intended for a specimen, I'd rather remain in my present blissful state of ignorance!"

"Faugh! you've no heart!"

"Neither have you!"

And both relapsed into their former moody silence—which they were not, however, suffered long to enjoy; for, presently, Mr. Benedick's confidential serving-man (his *wally*, as Mrs. Benedick called him) entered the room, and presented him the foreign papers, and a score of European letters, on a richly-chased salver.

"There is possibly something among these to relieve our doubts," said Benedick, proceeding calmly to the task of breaking seals and reading envelopes.

"Goodness gracious, husband! how slow you are!" exclaimed the impatient mistress of the mansion, during this tedious proceeding; "and here am I, all the while, dying of suspense!"

Suddenly, Mr. Benedick started—grew pale as death, and then crimsoned to the temples—as his eyes dwelt upon a paragraph in the London *Times*.

"Heavens! how you frighten me! Is it from our dear Julia!"

"Her!" shouted Benedick, almost frantic with passion;

“and you—you who have been the chief architect of this infernal fabric, read and for ever mourn your darling’s shame!” He could say no more, but handing her the paper, bade her read it for her herself. And the fashionable mother, trembling in her turn, grasped the sheet from her husband’s quivering hand, and read as follows:—

“Much scandal prevails, just now, in the Parisian circles, with regard to an interesting family affair, of which that gay metropolis was recently the scene. A certain Lady Southdown, young, wealthy, and pretty, and blest with a husband whose greatest fault was his exceeding good nature, lately took it into her head to elope with a distinguished *roué*—well-known for the number of duels he had fought, and the number of intrigues in which he had been concerned—and whom she met at a *bal costume*, whither she had gone in direct violation of her husband’s orders. The husband provided himself with pistols, and pursued his rival to a little hunting-lodge in the forest of Vincennes, whither the guilty couple had flown, and a duel was the consequence—both parties being deprived of life at the first fire. It is said that the disagreement between them originated in a bet, made by the abductor; that he would kiss his rival’s wife on a certain occasion—but which was prevented from being fulfilled by the interference of the jealous husband. The lady has disappeared, and it is supposed she has since committed suicide. This is the only intelligence worthy of note upon the *tapis*.”

“I don’t believe a word on it!” exclaimed Mrs. Benedick,

in the first outburst of her maternal feelings. "It's all a base fabrication, got up by that Southdown for the purpose of throwing dust in the eyes of the world. She never could have fell so low—a girl reared in such a sphere, with all the advantages of a fashionable education, and a fond mother's advice, to keep her straight! I won't believe it."

"Perhaps this letter, then, may help to convince you," said Benedick, handing her one, the superscription of which was in her daughter's hand-writing.

She broke the seal immediately; and the following brief, hastily-written lines met her astonished eyes:

"MOTHER: For the last time, a ruined and-disgraced daughter entreats your attention. I will not curse you, for you *are* my mother! but oh! had you never instilled into my once guileless heart those pernicious lessons, which have ever since proved its bane, how much happier, more contented, had been my lot! Ere this, the public prints have made my name notorious, and I may spare you the repetition of my tale of shame! Believe all that you read and hear, pray that the consequences of my extravagance and vanity, while on earth, may not militate against my hopes in Heaven, and expect to hear no more from your guilty, though repentant

"JULIA."

As she finished the perusal of this epistle, the excited mother raised her hands to her head, as if to repress a sudden pang, and fell heavily from her chair in a fit of apoplexy.



Servants were summoned by her alarmed partner, and everything done that could tend to her relief; but she only lingered until midnight, and died—without a word, without a struggle!

Now was Pryce Benedick, indeed, a lonely man. From the hour of his wife's death, he daily decreased in health—wasting away, by degrees, like a taper upon the eve of expiring, and growing so abrupt and stern in his demeanor, that he became an object of perpetual fear to his domestics, who one by one deserted him; until, at last, not a soul remained to cheer him in his frightful solitude. By extravagant promises, Crawley, indeed, succeeded in persuading a desperate character, who would have undertaken anything for money, to stay with him; and, strangely enough, this fellow, by his very insolence, so endeared himself to the old man, that the latter began to look forward to his daily quarrels with that smooth-tempered individual as the enlivening points of his earthly existence.

“Job,” he would say to his servant, when a fit of debility was on him, and he could not rise from his great arm-chair, “wheel me, you scoundrel, into the piazza that looks out on the garden.”

“Ain't you comfortable enough where you be?” Job would coldly answer; “al'us a callin' of a feller from his engagements, and wanting for to be wheeled somewehers!”

“Faugh!—get out o' my sight!—ye hound! ye serpent! ye undutiful vagabond!” Benedick would exclaim, when Job had grumblingly wheeled him on to the piazza. “Ye earn your wages easily—you do!”

And Job, dodging the cane which his master threw at his head, would whine, as he took it back to him—"was there ever a iller-used person in the world?"—and the rapidity with which he would skip out of the way, before his master could reach him with his stick, would have done credit to any posture-master in existence.

Meanwhile, the aforesaid Job, whose ruddy countenance seems familiar to us, was ransacking the house from top to bottom, appropriating to himself such objects of value and accommodation as he knew he could most easily dispense with (for a consideration) in the city; thus it happened that many of the most costly articles which had heretofore adorned the family mansion of the Benedicks, found their way into the shops of the pawnbrokers—those "houses" whence the articles pledged seldom or never "return"—and Job waxed fat and insolent upon the strength of his occasional "forced loans," as he facetiously termed them.

The blasts of March were rapidly giving way before the alternate smiles and tears of April; when, one pleasant afternoon, the air of dreamy solitude of which poets love to talk—over their steaming whiskey punches and fragrant Havanas—which lingered about the premises of Mr. Timothy Flint, was disturbed by a smart rat-tat, as if from the handle of a cane, upon the panels of his door.

"Oh! don't stand on ceremony, now!" growled a voice from the inside, snappishly. "I'm in no joking mood to-day; so come in at once; and—eh? this is a world!"—and Flint sank back into his seat, from which he was on the

point of rising, shocked—shaken from his moral axis, by the apparition which entered at his bidding.

“Surprisin’; ain’t it?” said the intruder—a personage of middling size, with a very ruddy face, dressed, in what is called by “knowing ones,” the “tip of the fancy;” and, moreover, in all the colors of a rainbow, in compliment, probably, to the coming spring. “Surprisin’ that a humble individual sich as Job Jarvis should revel in a suit like this. But there’s no knowin’ what may not be did in this world.”

“Job, you’re in luck,” said Mr. Flint, recovering from his prostration; “but, come now, I say, where did you steal those things? Tell me, now, like an honest lad, and I’ll say nothing about it to the police.”

“I didn’t steal ’em! upon my precious soul I didn’t, Mr. Flint,” replied Job, turning a shade less red, with apprehension, at the mysterious insinuation of his former tutor and patron; “I come by ’em honestly, sure as my name is Job!”

“That’ll do, Job, to tell the marines,” rejoined Mr. Flint, coolly; “you’ve found a nice chance somewhere, my boy, and you’ve been improving it. Come, now, honestly, Job—honestly, where and how did you get ’em?”

“It’s o’ no use tryin’ to come it over you, sir, it isn’t,” answered Job, with reckless desperation in his looks and bearing; “I *did* steal ’em, I own up. Oh! why did I come here at all?” he added, in his most lachrymose manner.

“To show off, Job; to flaunt your insolence and your fine clothes, in the face of your old tutor, who, you know, is as

poor as a Chinaman, and all because he's taken to being honest, and keeping decent company—that's why!"

"I did—I did; I own up!" groaned Job, who now, as he wrung his hands with grief, presented a piteous spectacle.

"And what tempted you to do it, Job?"

"I couldn't help it," retorted the victim; "the things was there, and I was inwiggled into it! But don't you betray me, and I'll tell you where there's lots more to be had. Oh! Moses, what a fix I'm in, to be sure!"

"A nice fix, I should say," rejoined Mr. Flint, feeling his chin, as doctors do, when arguing over a very bad case. "It grieves me, Job, my child, to see all my laborious teachings thus thrown away upon you. But the cap-piece of your villainy is to dare to offer to make me a companion in your crimes. It really arouses my indignation to such a pitch, that I must call in a friend to assist me."

And, as he turned to the closet, and opened it, Job expected to see nothing more nor less than a Hays walk out to apprehend him. When he saw only a jug, however, he began to comprehend a thing or two, and his eyes, or, rather, his nose, brightened considerably.

"Sit down, Job, and calm your feelings," said Flint, pouring a glass of the "raw material" for him. "And now you may go on with your developments—but speak low, Job, or you might compromise your reputation."

Job then gave his former associate a correct idea of what was transpiring at the family mansion in Westchester, where

he had been, for some weeks, having grown tired, as he said, of dishonest practices, employed as a servant; and added that there was a strong box, in one of the rooms, which defied all his efforts to lift and which would be worthy the talents and genius of Jack Sheppard, himself, were he still alive.

Flint meditated deeply for many minutes; and then, suddenly waking up, he patted Job familiarly on the shoulder, and took one of his hands in his own.

"That'll do, Job," he said, in a low whisper; "be sure you don't breathe a word of this to living soul, but call on me again at your earliest convenience, when we may talk the matter over, and arrange preliminaries."

Whereupon Job, delighted at having secured the assistance of his old protector, lightly crept down the stairs, and into the street.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## FORSAKEN BY ALL.

ON a certain delightful morning in June, a gentleman, elegantly dressed, and mounted on a steed of faultless make, came clattering up the road which ran between Fordham and Yonkers, biting with his polished teeth the curiously-shaped ivory head of a slender whip which he carried, and giving sundry other infallible proofs of being absorbed in a very brown study. After riding for some space of time in this heedless manner, the sudden stoppage of his horse caused Mr. Crawley (for it *was* that awe-inspiring personage) to look up and he found that, instead of following the beaten track to Westchester, the beast which he bestrode, more faithful to his stomach than to his master—and led by the sight of some hay loosely scattered upon the ground—had wandered, “of his own free will,” down a quiet rustic lane, to Mr. Crawley, at first, quite unknown, as the air of bewilderment with which he gazed around him plainly testified. Directly in front of the spot where Mr. Crawley had stopped, was a gate; beyond that gate was a gravelled path; and, at the termination of that path, a miniature villa, which struck that gentleman—involved, as he had just been, in a maze of mercenary speculations—as being familiar to him. A ride of a few steps

further put an end to his doubts. It was Knickerbocker Cottage, so lately the quiet residence of old Mr. Humphreys—a spot which for some reason or other Crawley did not seem to be much in love with.

“Confusion!” he muttered, with a hasty glance at his watch. “This unfortunate mistake will make me late, I fear. But better late than never, Theophilus Crawley!”

Time had fled away more rapidly than Mr. Crawley had bargained for, and he accordingly made up for his loitering by whipping and spurring the noble beast which he bestrode, until the poor creature’s sides were covered with foam and gashes. Arrived at the well-known domicile of the wealthy recluse, he jumped from his horse, and suffered him to stray wherever he found the herbage thickest and most inviting, and took his way to a magnificent avenue, bordered with elms, towards the house. The doors were all open, as he approached—a circumstance which did not much surprise him—for he knew the old man’s desolate condition. But when he had passed through the various corridors, and reconnoitered every apartment, without finding any trace of him he came to seek, he concluded that there had been foul play upon the premises.

“Some of that young villain Job’s doings!” he muttered between his clenched teeth, as he returned to the lower hall, after an ineffectual search above. “It would be a very sad affair if he had killed him. I hope not! I hope not!” All this he muttered very softly to himself, and his face was ashy pale, and his hands trembled much, as he descended the

cellar stairs, faintly conceiving—shall we say hoping?—that in some obscure recess of that noisome place the body might have been stowed!

And there, sure enough, he found his patron, extended, helpless, upon the slimy pavement, with blood upon his face, marks of a struggle for life upon his garments, and seeming signs of an approaching end. Crawley folded his arms, and smiled for an instant, like a fiend gloating over the body of a victim, upon the man whose hands had loaded him with favors, and then, raising him with little difficulty, bore him into the open air.

But the old man had not a mind to give up life so easily.

“My dear sir!” exclaimed Crawley, with an air of pretended solicitude, while he assisted him into a chair, “Let me trust that no serious injury has befallen you. Should you die thus prematurely, not only would your decease be felt as a public—I may say, a national—calamity, but the proud family of the Benedicks would be extinct for ever.”

“Don’t talk to me of death, man!” rejoined the sufferer, with an energy which Crawley did not suppose him to possess; “I have been bleeding for hours, and am faint—very faint.”

“You are bleeding yet, sir; suffer me to bind your forehead!—it will stay it for a while.” And while he thus employed himself, this modern Iago contrived to glean from his nearly exhausted patient that the injuries which had at first presented so fatal an appearance had been inflicted by Job, whose ignorance of the use of firearms, and want of strength, had



prevented the entire accomplishment of his purpose—namely, the assassination of his master, for the purpose of obtaining the key to his money-chest; an expectation, however, in which the young scoundrel was disappointed, as Benedick kept all his money safe in bank, and used none, save through Crawley's agency, for household purposes. Enraged at his ill success, the precocious youth had obtained a heavy adze, and proceeded with it to an old lumber closet, where, amid the family heir-looms, greasy pictures, antiquated furniture, and articles of domestic use, the useless rubbish of a by-gone century, reposed the box which he foolishly supposed to enshrine the treasure that he coveted. The lid was rotten, and a few blows of the adze, even from so frail a hand as that of Job, soon sufficed to shake it from its fastenings. It needed no raising, however, for, as the clasp was broken, it flew upwards with a crash, and a ghastly, grinning skeleton stood revealed to the horrified eyes of the conscience-stricken lad, who immediately dropped his adze, and fled, frightened into an ague by this simple adjunct of a doctor's studio; one of the few relics of Pryce's early studies long since thrown aside here, and forgotten.

It was at this moment that Mr. Crawley was bending over the body of his patron in the cellar, and as he ascended the stairs with his powerless burthen, the creator of all the mischief bounded out at the door, and was soon seen, by certain superstitiously-inclined persons, flying, like Tam O'Shanter, down the Harlem road, mounted upon the back of Mr. Crawley's well-fed stallion!

There was great rejoicing that evening at the hovel where Mr. Timothy Flint and his friends had been so comfortably located for the past few years. The achievement of Job, though not a master stroke, was such as to raise him wonderfully in the estimation of his old associates, and they resolved to make a night of it on the strength of the unexpected accession to their booty.

And they *did* make a night of it—to such an extent, that many of the company fell drunk before daylight; and solitary wayfarers, pedestrianizing it at a great distance along the avenues, wondered at the unwonted racket, unable to imagine whence the din proceeded. Within the “den,” as the night waxed late, all was tumult and bacchanalian confusion; until, at last, one, more drunken than the rest, made a dash for the fire, and seizing from it a burning brand, cast it with a drunken yell into the midst of the dancers; then ensued a scene which beggared all description. Communicating to the clothes of several of the bacchanals, which were like so much tinder, the flames next ascended to the rotten wood of the low ceiling, and soon the ruined homestead was enveloped in a sheet of flames. Many, tearing away with ease portions of the flooring, made their escape, thoroughly sobered by the awful catastrophe which had deprived them of a house; but many, also, stayed behind, and were roasted, piecemeal, in the burning furnace; whilst neighbors grouped around from far and near, and wondered at the sight.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## EXCITING EVENTS.

It has been more than once hinted, in the course of this novel, that there was one quality among all others, great and small, upon the having of which Mr. Crawley prided himself not a little—namely: self-possession. Nevertheless, he was not particularly delighted on making the discovery that some one had stolen away his favorite horse, and if he did not exactly swear upon the occasion, it was from the same motive which actuated the blasphemous wagoner in the story, when he had spilled his wagon load of flour—he couldn't do justice to the subject!

No time was to be lost, however, and, therefore, instead of trying to hunt up the thief, or making a moan over his misfortune, he hurried across fields, ditches, and seeming impenetrable thickets, until he found himself in the bar-room of an inn, which was called, pleasantly enough, the "Jolly Bachelors," although the countenances of the several rough-looking customers who looked up on Crawley's entrance somewhat belied the name. *The Dismal Stage Drivers* would have been a far better one; for the locomotive had then almost prostrated their calling, and the independent stage-drivers, in consequence, were being reduced to the last stages of despo-

ration and drink. Crawley didn't care a jot for their miseries, however, and refused all inducements to remain and hear a circumstantial recital of their woes, at a meeting which was to be held that evening in the public room of the tavern, for the purpose of eliciting the sympathies (*and the dimes*) of the inhabitants of the county. But, having informed the red-nosed landlord of his necessities, the latter, upon Mr. Crawley's leaving a certain amount, by way of security, furnished his "queer customer" (whom he suspected strongly of being an absquatulating director, or something in that line), with a tolerable looking animal, which the agent immediately bestrode, and dashed away from the inn in glorious style, amid a peal of graveyard laughter from the assembled society of dismal stage-drivers—who regarded Crawley in all sorts of kaleidoscopic views, merely because he wouldn't ask them to drink.

"A remarkable day this," wheezed Boniface, re-entering his domicil, followed by his "customers."

A groan came up from the toeless boots of the dismal staggers, and spread itself about the apartment, at this announcement.

"An eventful day is this! There's the event of Joe Biggins coming back from California, and paying his little bill of six'nsixpuns, which he's been a owin' of me ever since the locomotive 'gan a runnin'."

Here there was another groan; and *such* a groan! It seemed as if all the waistcoat strings in the room must have burst with the effort.

"And a tellin' me, that things had took a new turn with him; which I seen plain enough, though, by reason of his gay blue coat and yaller vest."

The thought of Joe Biggins in a gay blue coat and "yaller vest" proved too much for the feelings of the assemblage, and a third groan broke from their cavernous jaws.

"Then, there's the sober-faced chap, that camed in early this forenoon, and asked for one brandy-and-water, and paid sixpence—as if prices hadn't never been reduced, nor nothin'."

"Oh! he be hanged!" growled one of the most dismal of the dismals.

"I dare say he is, before this," answered the publican; "he looked very like to a victim of some temperance society, or steam opposition company; or, perhaps, he's been to Furrier's menagerie to see the Phalanx, and got bit. Anyway, he went down to'ards the woods, yonder, and that's event number two."

This dreadful suggestion was insufficient to draw a faint grunt, even, from the dismals; suicide was so common among them that they had learned to view it with stoical indifference.

"Last, and not least," said the landlord, "there's that there chap what came here in such a hurry, and wouldn't drink nothin', nor stand treat to nobody, and went off to'ards York with a face like a chalk mark on my bar-room door."

"A rascal, no doubt," said one.

"'Scaped from some prison," said another.

"Blood on his shirt bussum, plain!" added a third.

"You're all on the wrong scent, boys," said the publican, when each had had his fling at the unsuspecting Crawley, "it's my opinion that he's a——"

"What? which?"

"A—'squattelater!"

Here Boniface drew himself up, refilled his pipe, and took a kind of half-eye view of his cronies, as if conscious of the effect that his superior personal acquirements had exercised upon them.

"What's a 'squattelater?" at length asked one.

"Don't you know, none of you?"

"No!" Every one said "no."

"Well, then, as near as I can get at it, he's a bank director, what gets into excellent favor with his associates, and then runs away with all the specie—that's a 'squattelater!"

What the result of all this display of superior knowledge might have been, there's no telling, had it not been followed by an immediate invitation to drink on the part of the host.

Before they had emptied the glasses which they had raised to their lips, there was a sudden peal of thunder without, followed by a sharp, quick flash of lightning, and a drenching torrent of rain.

"The old 'un's beating his sheet iron to some purpose, to-night," remarked the proprietor of the Jolly Bachelors, good-humoredly. "Just like your luck, my boys; there won't be no-meetin', after all!"

Oh! the groan with which the dismals received this little piece of pleasantry.

A dead silence succeeded, interrupted only by the noises of the elements, or the landlord washing the dirty tumblers (he had a red-pated barkeeper who fulfilled that duty once!) in his retreat behind the tempting rows of bottles and decanters. As the storm increased in violence, the dismals being closely huddled about the bar-room fire, each wrapped in his own reflections, the door was once more flung open, and two female figures emerged from the pitchy darkness of the road (for it had long been night), and stood shivering in the centre of the floor. One was old, ugly, and decrepit; the other was slender, and trembled violently, but was so closely wrapped in her garments, that, had it not been for a single curl of glossy black hair which strayed from beneath her ragged bonnet, her age could have been but vaguely guessed at. Both were ragged and in want, and that was enough for the pot-bellied publican.

"Well, well—what do you want there, hey? holding an honest man's door open to the danger and discomfort of respectable people!"

"Charity and shelter from the elements!" said the elder of the two.

"Charity and shelter, eh?—a pretty idea; you know you're only lookin' for a chance to pick gentlemen's pockets, or something of that sort—so be off with you!"

"Pity us! we are women!" sobbed a not unmusical, but choking voice from beneath the hood of the younger.

“Ah, yes! pity!—that’s the tune your sect is always a harping upon,” said the red-nosed man, who was warming his back at the fire. “Get out—or I’ll send you both to—you know where!”

And, as he made a movement towards them, the two unfortunates retreated to the door—where, for an instant, the elder paused, undaunted by the scowls of the angry landlord.

“Curse you!” she said—“and all who deal in your unholy traffic! It has made a beggar of me, and outcasts of my children, and in my despair I shower down on ye the bitterest malediction of an outraged woman’s heart! curse ye! curse ye!” and, for some moments, her voice continued to be heard above the loudest din of the elements, as she frantically called upon Heaven to avenge her upon one of that numerous tribe to whom she attributed the cause of all her troubles.

“That there’s a pleasant creter,” remarked the red-nosed man, returning, undisturbed, to the fire. “I makes no doubt she’d took a drink, if I’d axed her.”

Like most persons of his calling, this overgrown receptacle for beer and pudding never heard himself addressed by a stranger, without supposing that there was a design on foot to get a “drink” out of him.

“It was a little hard, though,” hazarded one of the most quiet of the dismals; “they was wimmen, Jim!”

“Bah! don’t talk to me o’ wimmen! I’ve had enough on ’em, ever since that bad quarter was giv’ to me, by one of their kidney at the market. And as for the cruelty of



the thing, they're only vagrants, and will be taken up for sich!"

Yes—well he knew it, that bloated, cross-grained piece of humanity!—it was a crime by the statute to be without the means of purchasing a home; it was a crime to walk erect upon the bosom of the "generous earth," with its clustering foliage and golden grain, which God once gave to all; a crime to seek repose beneath that starry canopy, which, luckily, man cannot reach, or he would, long ere this, have claimed it for his own! Society drives its victims from its doors for their poverty, and casts them into a prison, among thieves and felons of all denominations, for obeying its directions! Verily, our penitentiaries are excellent schools for vice, and it is ten to one that the poor wretch, who first finds lodgment in our city prison as a "vagrant," will eventually enter its doors, a murderer—never to pass therefrom alive! Therefore, most aptly was it named "The Tombs."

In the meantime, Mr. Crawley, all unconscious of the unsavory character which he had left behind him at the "Jolly Bachelors," had urged the animal which he had hired of the red-nosed landlord, to its utmost speed; for it was getting to be dusk, and he saw, with feelings of peculiar uneasiness, that a storm was brewing. Despite his best efforts, nevertheless, he had not gotten farther than a mile from the inn, and was cantering through a small patch of woods, which line the road at either hand, when the storm burst over him, drenching him at once to the skin; and a bolt falling at the same moment upon a tall tree, some hundreds of

yards in advance, hurled it with a fearful crash directly across Crawley's path. Affrighted by the sudden uproar, the now lively animal unexpectedly dashed forward, in utter defiance of whip, spur, and rein, and taking the blazing mass at a single bound, she caught her feet, stumbled, and fell to the ground—having thrown Crawley, in a series of somersets, a distance of several yards from where she had herself fallen.

How it was that the "confidential agent of the house of Benedick & Co." was not instantaneously deprived of life by being thus launched through the air, as it were, like a stone from a catapult, it is hard to say. At any rate, he did not die, though the horse did; and on recovering his senses, some five minutes after the calamity had happened, he found himself sitting upright, upon some loose straw, with his back supported against what appeared to be the foundation wall of a ruined building, of which there are many yet scattered about Westchester county; deserted by their families during some of the incursions of the British soldiery, at the time of the Revolution, and ruthlessly burned by the latter, but rarely rebuilt. A rude fire was sputtering and crackling before him, and, when the smoke had sufficiently cleared away to enable him to recognise objects, he could distinguish two female figures—the youngest of whom was violently chafing his hands and temples, in an endeavor to restore him to consciousness; while the other, an old, haggard, and decrepit woman, sat crouching over the fire, like a salamander, occasionally turning to her companion to give vent to some bitter remark.

"Why do you take so much trouble for one who would not have soiled his dainty clothes to do the like for us?" snarled the eldest, on one of these interesting occasions.

"Because I am not old like you, and frozen to stone; and, because, having myself experienced the need of mercy, I would be merciful to others," was the reply.

"You'll have your trouble for your pains, I'm thinking. If he wakes, it will only be to howl and writhe with agony, and it would be a greater mercy to let the chap slip his wind without knowing it."

"How can you talk so coolly of abandoning a fellow-creature to such a fate? Do you not believe there is a Heaven?"

"Humph! I believed a great many things once; for I was young, and handsome, and credulous, as you have been; I believed that there were such things in the world as love and happiness—but I lived to be deceived, and learned to deceive others in my turn. Ha! ha! that's the true revenge—the true revenge!"

The other shuddered at the words of her aged companion in misery, and resumed her former occupation.

"How if he should know you!" suddenly asked the crone, after a momentary pause.

"Impossible! and if he should, what need I care? Do I look like one that should heed what others may say of me? Hush! he is coming-to. A moment, and—"

"Whoagh! Caspian!—good fellow—'tis nothing: stoop—stoop, boy! and over we go!" exclaimed Mr. Crawley (in tones very unlike those of a dying man).

"Why, where in the devil's name—" said he, looking confusedly around.

"Ay—ay; that's right," growled the crone; "call first on your patron's name; and, maybe, as he got you into this scrape, he'll get you out of it."

"Will somebody have the kindness to tell me if I am, or am not, Mr. Crawley, of 775 East Two-hundredth and ninety-ninth street, New York; and, also, give me some particulars relative to where I am, and when and how I got here?" Crawley continued, in the same discontented, snappish tone as before. And, as he spoke, he tossed a piece of silver over towards the crone.

In less than two minutes, Mr. Crawley knew all that he desired, and more; and bitterly he cursed the unconscious of his detention.

"Staying here won't mend the matter," said the crone; "you're on your feet again, and can walk as well as ever, barring a little limp."

"My business is urgent," he answered; "'tis of life and death, and I must reach New York before morning, or Pryce Benedick, Esq., of Ashburton Place, is a dead man!"

"Benedick, did you say?" cried the young woman; suddenly starting forward from the obscure corner into which she had retreated upon Crawley's rising.

"Yes, young woman; and it's a name you should hold in perpetual reverence as a benefactor. Many's the penny he has given to the children of such as you."

"You shall have a horse, if I die for it!" she cried wildly;

and, rushing from the place, she disappeared for about five minutes; at the end of which time, Crawley heard her returning, leading a horse, freshly caparisoned, by the bridle.

"Take him!" she exclaimed, rapidly; "take him, and ask no questions, but away!"

Crawley did as he was bidden, and then the old hag, and her young companion in misery, were alone.

"Where did you get that horse?" asked the old woman, sharply, almost ere Crawley's heels had crossed the threshold.

"From the shed of the nearest inn, where he was tied! They may send me to jail for it, but I care not. Come!"

"Let go my clothes. Why, what a twitter you're in. Can't we wait till the storm is over?"

"No—not an instant!" rejoined the girl, frantically; "there is work to do, and gold for them that do it! Ask not, but come!"

These were the couple whose intrusion, at the "Jolly Bachelors," had caused so much displeasure to the red-nosed publican and his customers. Had Mr. Marcus Mumps, which was the name of that august personage, but faintly imagined the object which had drawn them from their retreat, at such a time, how different would have been his hostship's conduct!

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## THE DEATH.

PRYCE BENEDICK lay extended in his great arm-chair, drawn close to the fireplace in the drawing-room of the old family mansion. Glorious music made the tempest about those pointed eaves and tottering gables, and the wind held revel in the empty halls, until it seemed as if a legion of demons must have been loosed to fill them. And Benedick, moved by raging pains, would have cried aloud in unison with the wind; but there was something so supernatural and ghostlike about the dreary room, that he dreaded to hear the sound of his own accents; and there he sat, gazing into the fire, and counting the tickings of the great clock in the hall, as mute and motionless as if the spirit had already fled its earthly tenement, and life was there no more.

Suddenly a door opened—a rush of air came into the drawing-room, and a female figure cast herself at his feet, and grasped his gown convulsively, while she sobbed:

“Thank God! there is yet hope; he is not dead!”

“Why—what—what is this?” asked Benedick, staring at the dripping figure, in alarm and doubt. “Who are you? and why do you hold me so fast?”

“FATHER! forgive me!” sobbed the miserable creature; “I

deeply erred, but deep has been my penance. For months I have avoided you, as unworthy to re-enter your presence; but the thought of your illness has supplanted every other feeling, and I am here to beg a blessing and a pardon ere you die!"

"'Tis false; you want my money! my money! but you shan't have it! Crawley shall have it all—any one, rather than you—you, who have so disgraced your family, that you are no longer one of it! Hence, from my sight!—begone!"

"Father! don't spurn me! There's a storm without; and I, *your Julia*, of whom you were so proud, so fond, am in rags—am famishing!"

"Begone, I tell you! don't tempt me to strike you, girl!—unclench my gown, I say!—fiends and furies!"

There was a blow—a shriek—a rustling of garments, as the wretched outcast passed from her father's threshold, and the miserable man was alone. Then it was that his pains were redoubled—the tempest appeared to have gained additional fury, and every timber in the old house seemed possessed of a voice, and added a shriek to *hers*. And now selfishness came, too; and the invalid writhed in his chair, regretful of what he had done, and hungry, and cold, and shouted for her to return.

All bounteous Heaven! can it be that his prayer is answered! The outward door swings open with a noise; footsteps approach; they enter; and the invalid is surrounded by an anxious, wondering group.

"My daughter—is she not among you?" he asks, in a garrulous, wandering manner. "She was here but now."

Startled by the voice, a single person advances from the group to the speaker's side. Their eyes meet—a mutual exclamation escape their lips:

"Alexander!"

"EDITH!"

And, attempting to rise from his seat, Benedick stumbled forward upon the floor, breathed a few inarticulate sounds, struggled an instant or so in the greatest agony, and expired!

A smile came over the haggard countenance of the woman as he fell. She turned without a word, and walked with a firmer tread and a brighter eye from the apartment.



## CHAPTER XL.

## VIOLET FINDS A NEW PROTECTOR.

CUNNING Mr. Crawley! your schemes are well laid; but they are built upon a perilous foundation, and a breath of wind may scatter them to all the quarters of the compass. The miserable girl who saved you from the death you so richly merited, fancied that you rode to save her father's life, and sent a blessing with you. She little knew your true intentions, and wise was it in you to conceal them; for, had she read your cankered heart aright, a tigress had been a safer companion than she!

The news of Benedick's death spread rapidly through the neighborhood, and affected none so deeply as "Mr. Humphreys." Without loss of time he made a few preparations, and, accompanied by Herbert, set out for the scene of excitement. He arrived there to find the house stripped of everything valuable that it contained:

But the old man was to make a discovery, which pained him more deeply than anything which had preceded it. The absence of Alice seemed to him the most important event of all. He ransacked the entire neighborhood, and followed up with eagerness every suggestion which seemed to cast a light upon the matter. And, when it was found that all his efforts

were unavailing, and the melancholy apprehension that she had fallen into the river began by degrees to force itself upon his mind, the old man settled down into a heavy fit of melancholy.

Mr. Humphreys, however, did not believe she was altogether lost, and the matter was still in this unsettled state, when a note, which reached them on the afternoon succeeding to the night of her disappearance, elucidated the mystery. It was written in a female hand, and contained merely the direction to the place where Alice had been conveyed by her mother.

Herbert wondered at the old man's emotion as he read the epistle. But, wonder, when Humphrey Benedick, as we must now call him, found himself once more united to wife and child!

Alice was, in fact, the child of Humphrey Benedick. A private marriage in a village church had scarcely consummated his union with Edith Gray, when Benedick, who was even then making preparations to acknowledge her in the presence of parents, was shocked to hear that she was living under the protection of his brother. The blow was too harsh for his noble nature to bear up under. Humphrey went to sea, leaving his affairs in a very disjointed condition, and Alice was adopted by Pryce, as we have seen. News having arrived of his brother's shipwreck, the latter, of course, took possession of the fortune left for Alice. But nothing had ever been said of this to her, and she had been brought up from her infancy to the hour in which she left the shelter of their roof as the poor partaker in the rich Benedick's bounty.

Mr. Humphrey Benedick lost no time in making himself known, and settling up his brother's affairs, which were found to be in a better condition than he had anticipated. Although the whole estate as it was belonged of right to him, the good old man advertised for the absent heirs of Pryce, that justice might at least be done *them*. But nothing could be gleaned with regard to either Julia or Max.

## CHAPTER XLI.

## THE CLOUDS DISPERSED.

AND so the generous forbearance of Humphrey Benedick was at length rewarded. But he took no mean advantage of his triumph. He did not turn to the curious world and tell them how his brother had deceived him, nor how that brother had, like a villain, gorged on uncounted riches, thinking his victim dead in a far-off clime; nor how he himself, with sufficient means, acquired abroad in the pursuit of an honest independence, had been occupied since his return in doing good, choosing during that time rather to lead the humble, quiet life of a bachelor than to inflict a stain upon the family honor by exposing him who had fattened and grown haughty on his wealth.

Search was now made for Crawley, but without success. He had absconded, it was shortly afterwards discovered, to "Merrie England," taking with him all the ready money that he could lay hands on, and leaving some of the banks minus to a heavy amount.

What had become of Alice did not for several weeks transpire, but at the expiration of that time it was discovered that she had been seen, on the evening of her disappearance,

leaving the Benedick mansion in company with a closely-veiled female, who was taken by those who observed them for one of the numerous objects of her charity.

The reasons for her abrupt departure are easily explained up to the time of her flight.

The life of Alice had presented little but a changeless routine of every-day cares and duties, varied only by sundry little adventures incurred during her self-imposed task—although to her that task was a labor of love—of administering to the comforts of her suffering fellow mortals. Neglected as she had been, however, by her proud kinsfolk, the quietude of her existence was by no means displeasing to her. She had no taste for the glittering round of fashionable amusements with which her cousins Julia and Herbert had continued to kill time, and the leisure thus acquired was sedulously devoted to the cultivation of her mind. Mr. Benedick possessed a fine library, of which he had made but little use since the day of its purchase, and Alice had it mostly to herself. Many an hour which would otherwise have hung wearily upon her hands was passed by the poor girl in profiting by the treasures which Pryce had the good sense to heap together, but neither the taste nor the patience to turn to advantage.

She was sitting one afternoon in the dim solitude of her guardian's study, intent upon a favorite author, when that vague sense of another's presence, which sometimes comes over us before our eyes have detected an intrusion, caused her suddenly to look up. Alice trembled as she did so,

although the object which met her gaze was not of a nature to arouse in her any fears—for to her the weeds of poverty were as familiar as the finest robes of the season to her fashionable cousins.

The increasing darkness of the apartment scarcely sufficed to reveal to her inquiring glance the figure of a strange woman, clad in the most miserable garments, and whose face was deeply furrowed by marks of suffering.

“Do not be alarmed at my presence, miss,” she said; “I have purposely sought you here, while most of the family were engaged in another quarter, that we might have no witnesses to our interview. For well I know that the Benedicks do not love books, and I rightly judged that I should find you among them.”

“You seem strangely familiar with the habits of the Benedicks,” replied Alice, in some trepidation lest her aunt should break in upon them, and find her in conversation with such a character in such a part of the mansion. “But, tell me, what is it you wish? If there is anything that I can do——”

“You would do it for the sake of suffering humanity, even though your own comfort might be the loser. Yes, I know you well, gentle Alice, obscure as you think yourself; and it is because I have heard your name coupled with blessings on the lips of more than one wretched outcast like myself that I am here to-day. Had you been proud and selfish like your neighbors, you had been spared the trouble of this meeting, and I——”

She paused here, as if overcome by emotion, while Alice gazed at her in silent wonder—her manner was so unlike that of an applicant for charity.

Alice's interest in her visitor was unaccountable. There seemed a strange influence in the weird figure by her side, beneath which she almost quailed, and from which, notwithstanding, she felt no desire to be relieved. For more than an hour the visitor occupied the orphan's ear with the story of her life—how, as Edith Gray, she had been betrayed by the haughty wretch who disdained even to show courtesy to his brother's child, while using her income to mend his own failing fortunes. Alice's determination was instantly formed. Low as Edith Gray had fallen, she was her mother, and the poor girl, now that she knew all, would rather share with her to whom she owed her being the humblest roof, than remain a moment longer an inmate of the merchant's domicile. To the regeneration and support of poor, fallen Edith, Cousin Alice would meekly devote the remainder of her days.

To take such a step as this required more than ordinary courage, but Alice was resolved; and even the loss of caste, which would greet her withdrawal from the prosperous world, to engage in this work of self-devotion, could not deter her from it. The premises to which Edith Gray ("Mother Peg" no longer) transferred Alice were not of the pleasantest, but the gentle girl gave not a moment's attention to that. The salvation of a soul, and that soul her mother's, occupied all her thoughts.

A note written by Alice to Mr. Humphrey Benedick, soon after, informed him of their whereabouts. Humphrey imme-

diately repaired to the side of his lost wife, but it was only to close her eyes.

And now dawns a brighter day for Cousin Alice!

The morning which succeeded the return of the little family to Knickerbocker Cottage was emblematical of Herbert's hopes. Dressing himself very early, he stole quietly betimes into the blooming garden, where he found Violet inspecting the buds before him. It was nothing more than instinct which prompted him to place his arm about the delicate waist of the young lady, and instinct, also, which prompted him to brush away the dew from a pair of lips far brighter than any bud that bloomed in the garden! And as her little hand rested confidingly upon his shoulder, and her glossy curls rustled against his glowing cheek, he could not help saying:

"Dear Violet! to trifle now after what has happened, would be almost sacrilege. I love you dearly, Violet, and your eyes have told me, if your lips have not, that I am not indifferent to you. Perhaps you will say that even this is more than I deserve, and that I should be contented with this great amount of happiness! But, Violet, you are grown to be a lovely woman, and it is fit that you should have a protector—one who will be a husband as well as a companion to you! You will give me that right, will you not?"

We will not be positive that Violet *said* anything, in reply to so irresistible an argument, but certain it is that they exchanged an embrace upon the strength of it, and that arrangements were immediately put in progress for a wedding.

Not until the ceremony had been fully accomplished, how-



ever, did Humphrey Benedick unveil the great secret which had for so long a time rendered his acts a mystery to Herbert; then, gazing upon the handsome youth, as he stood there before the chancel, holding his betrothed by the hand, in the mellow afternoon light which fell through the colored window, with a look of mingled pride and pleasure, he took him to his breast, and welcomed him as his "dear, dear son!"

Little further is to be added, except that the wedding took place—Mr. Lyle giving away the bride and Humphrey Benedick throwing in the dowry. And a stranger was there, moreover, to partake of the general joy. HARRY LYLE it was, who had returned, after perils and adventures of no ordinary kind, to revisit his home. The report of his death had been one of those rumors which reporters, with their proverbial accuracy, so often disseminate, to the alarm of anxious relatives, although it had been, as he remarked, no fault of Neptune's that his bones were not lying ere that at the bottom of the sea. During the time that he had been absent, Harry had not been idle, and the proceeds of several years' hard service soon sufficed to place his father once more on a business footing. For, with the return of his son and the happy settlement of his daughter, Walter Lyle's old contentedness—his former health and spirits, returned to bless his hearthstone.

Shortly after this there was another marriage, the parties in which were gentle Cousin Alice and Harry Lyle.

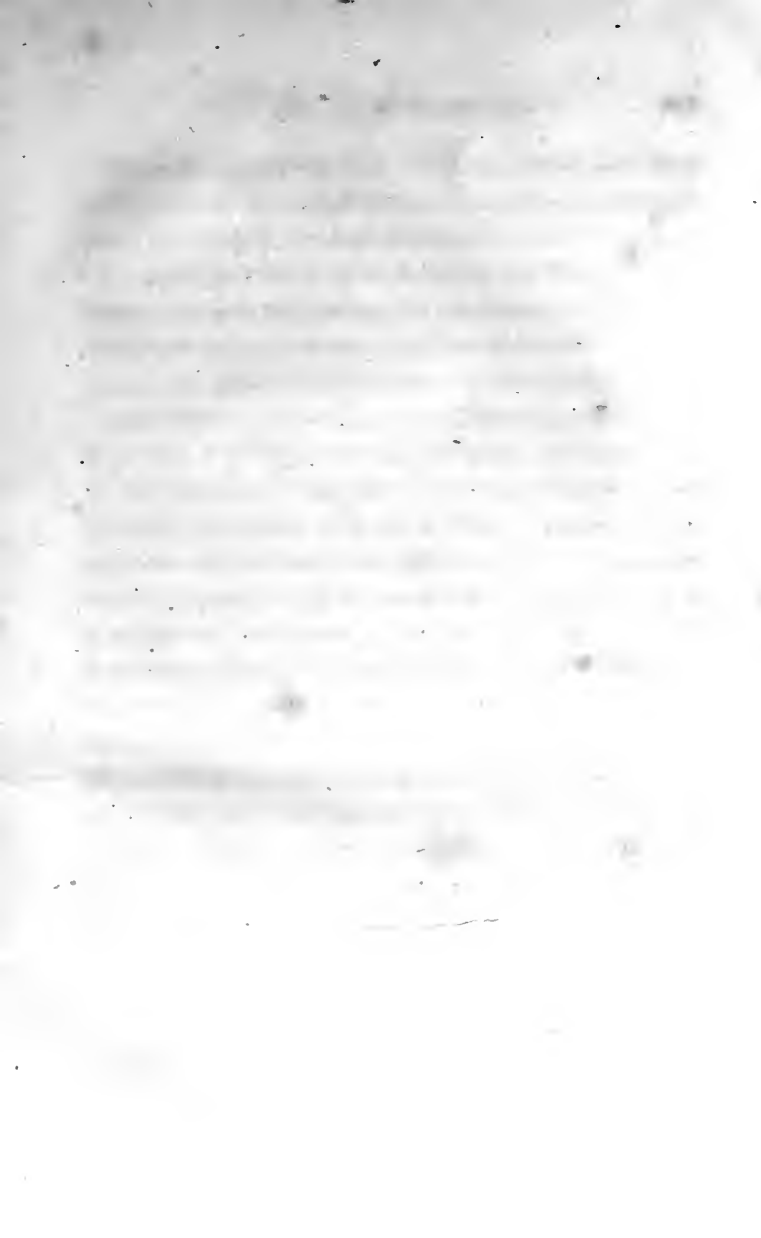
"MR. HUMPHREYS," as we see by the papers occasionally, still lives and flourishes. His time is entirely devoted to the carrying out of philanthropic projects, and the amount of

good that he has conferred upon society by his generous donations and unrelaxing attention is inconceivable. There are now Missions for the regeneration of the poor of all ages, and Homes for the Friendless of every sex and shade. The fine old fellow occasionally indulges in more than one pleasant dream while smoking his pipe of a summer's afternoon beneath the woodbined eaves of Knickerbocker Cottage.

Looking into futurity, he fancies "a lapse of twenty years," during which a change more remarkable than that which greeted the waking vision of Aladdin has come across the scene. Turning a little to the right out of Broadway (he may wander in that direction under the new state of things without the fear of contamination that came over him of old), the citizen interested in the salubrity and well-being of his metropolis, finds in place of the pestilential regions which formerly blasted his sight on the same spot, a Park, spacious, airy, and commanding, interspersed with miniature hills and dales, and covered with a growth of hardy trees, among which the birds build their nests without the fear of molestation. More than one cooling fountain casts its jets of liquid health into the air, and in the centre is erected a monument, bearing an inscription commemorative of the change.

Let us hope, in all sincerity, that the heart's wish of "Old Humphreys" may be realized!

THE END.







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*Violet the child of the City.*

*One Child of the City*

*Violet*

*Feb 27th 1871*

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